

EG'S ANNUAL LOOK AT THE LATEST IN FANTASY GAMING!

ELECTRONIC GAMES

THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 5

SONIC 3

SEGA UNVEILS SONIC'S NEWEST
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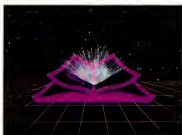
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About the art— We at EG would like to thank the following artists for their contributions to this issue:

Greg Wiley — Cover
Eric Curry — All department logos, and various photography
Chris Spahn — EG Interview
Bill Vorn — Goals
Mark Werts — EG Awards
This space is usually used to say some of the funny things that come to mind while we are writing the issue. However, during the production of this issue, one of our favorite musicians succumbed to a long bout with cancer and passed away. Therefore, we are not feeling very funny. This goes out to Frank Zappa—the musical genius and wonderful human being. You will be missed. Everybody send your lights to him.



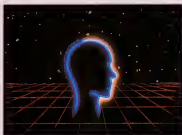
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POWER ON!

The Magazine of Interactive Experiences

Every season of the year has its own set of traditions. And if there's one thing I like more than slapping the withered hand of the past, it's tradition. For magazines, it's a time to inventory the year just ended and look toward the future.

Electronic gaming had an incredible year in 1993, but let's leave detailed examination of that subject for the mammoth "Best of the Year" section elsewhere in this issue.

As I write my February editorial, it's the future that rivets my attention.

We now call **Electronic Games** "The Magazine of Interactive Experiences." It's more to us than a catchy new line to run beneath the magazine's logo on the cover. This slogan is the yardstick by which we measure every single piece of software that is submitted for review. Our critics judge every game according to whether it provides players with an entertaining experience—a good time.

No amount of technical virtuosity can gain a bad play-experience a high rating in our pages. Part of our mission is to separate great games from great technology demos, before you spend your money.

We also try to make **EG** a two-way communications medium. This magazine offers readers many ways to interact with us. I feel that it's this give-and-take that will create the best possible **Electronic Games**.

I despise editorials built around the phrase "This is your magazine." It's a crock, and it's a cop-out. Who is the Beloved Publisher paying to make the magazine good? If it stinks, whose fault is it? The answer to both questions is obvious; the editors are responsible. It's our duty to give you the most informative and enjoyable publication on the newsstand.

What you can do is point us in the right directions. Feedback, the letters forum, is open to any reader who has a comment about this publication or electronic gaming. Your opinions are guaranteed to get a careful reading. We've done stories and added regular departments in response to letters in the past, and it will happen in the future, too.

The Reader Poll is another way you can shape the content of **Electronic Games**. The "favorite game" questions are the basis for the monthly rankings in the *Hotline* section. We run more articles about our readers' favorite titles and categories than ones which don't get your votes. Similarly, we give much more space to the hardware systems, games and subjects our readers list as most desirable on their Reader Poll questionnaires.

And when **EG** doesn't mention a key bit of information you want or need, write to the Game Doctor. The Software Sawbones has his finger on the pulse of electronic gaming and exhaustively researches the answers to every reader inquiry he puts in his celebrated column. Plus, he gives the best letter each month a sack of impossible-to-get gaming goodies.

This month, there's an especially significant interactive opportunity. For the second consecutive year, **Electronic Games** is giving the world's gamers a chance to pick the best video, computer, multimedia, and portable interactive electronic entertainment.

The editors have combined to produce this salute to the outstanding games of 1993, but our selections are merely a nominations ballot. It's up to you to winnow down more than 100 candidates to an elite group; the Best Electronic Games of 1993. Please complete the ballot (or a facsimile) and participate in the hobby's most important annual election.

— Arnie Katz

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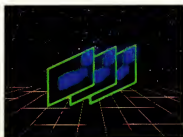
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FEEDBACK

Letters From Our Readers

Is Creativity Dead?

Am I the only one who thinks today's games have lost all originality? Almost all 16-Bit games are reshaped 8-Bit titles—scrolling shooters, run and jump platform games and fighting contests. Where is the creative magic that the early systems enjoyed? All the digitized graphics, full-motion video and CD quality stereo sound will not save a game with bad game play. I hope the games for the new 32- and 64-Bit systems won't be reshaped 16-Bit titles. Keep your fancy systems! I'll keep playing my Atari 2600! It may not have the graphics and sound of today's systems, but what it lacks in those areas it more than makes up for in game play.

J.D.

Chicago, IL

Logic suggests that all the good new ideas might have been used up on the first round of video games and all that's left for newer game developers is to either rehash the old ones or make do with second-rate later ideas. In reality, J.D., there are many new games with new ideas, but they are not as visible within the massive output from the industry. It's our job at EG to try to help you pan for the gold. The following letter puts another light on the subject.

The Game's the Thing

The fanzine 2600 Connection got me to thinking about the Atari 2600 and those who wish to keep it around for a while longer. The Atari 2600 is dead in the modern video game world, as dead as Victrolas and gramophones are in the audio world. Who would really want to go back to either one? But are now only of interest to collectors. Both, like the music those early record players played, what should survive from the 2600 and other classic systems are the games.

Who wouldn't rather hear Brahms on a modern CD system than on a wax cylinder player? The music continues on in another, superior format. But that is

where the current game manufacturers have let us down. They have a system that only plays Guns 'n Roses when we want to listen to Brahms.

A favorite game is forever. I still want to play classic **Gyryss**...no updates, thank you! For the purest game of **Gyryss** I go to my Atari 800. A case where a manufacturer did give me what I wanted was the translation of **Ms. Pac-Man** for the Genesis. Once you play that version you'll never want to go back to the 2600 translation. That's what most older players want—their favorite games presented the best they can be.

Well, now that I've vented my spleen, I'm going to get my hat, sit on the dock and play a little **Fishing Derby**.

Jayson Hill
Knoxville, TN

The classics all boast superb play-action, which accounts for their enduring popularity. Look for a collector's column in a near-future issue of EG.

Yes, Team!

When I read Bill Kunkel's statement, "Perhaps best of all **Bill Walsh College Football** is the first football contest to be available for four-player simultaneous action," in his review in the September **EG**, I rushed to my TurboGrafx game system to see if my five-player simultaneous play **TV Sports Football** game had disappeared. Hey, it's still there!

John C. Boas
Holmes, NY

Whew! Thank goodness! Good point, John. Thanks for the correction!

Swordquest Revisited

I am writing to clarify some things from Shane Shaffer's letter to the Game Doctor in the Dec. '93 **EG**. I can confirm that **Swordquest: Waterworld** was released. It was quite easy compared to the first two games, as clues did not need to be found in any certain order. Because of this, a tie-breaker was needed, and then (yes, after) it was announced that the entry deadline was

being extended—apparently someone took legal action because the game was only distributed via the Atari Club and was therefore unfair to other potential entrants. After this point there is no news, and AMA, the judging agency, has no records about what happened to the crown or any of the further prizes.

On the subject of 2600 keyboard/computer add-ons, the Spectravision Computate was released, though apparently in relatively small quantities.

Russ Perry Jr.
Omro, WI

*Thanks, Russ, for the further information on **Swordquest** and the Atari 2600 add-ons.*

Highway 'Cross the Sea

One note on the growing subject of a "Digital Highway" is that it is closer than most people think. Well, in England, at least. I've heard of a "Data Super Highway" taking shape all over England, namely because of the country's size and its pre-existing national fiber-optics network. The cable TV companies will be offering what they are calling "true interactive television programming" to subscribers, though I didn't hear much about games. I did notice home (blah) shopping, banking, etc. The most significant point is the one hardware standard the British cable companies will be sharing. Unlike our British neighbors, it seems we aren't headed toward a uniform approach to Interactive TV I believe we could all benefit from multi-company uniform standards for interactive media. It would seem the most logical next step.

Bryan Hold
Seattle, WA

Ah, but we're talking multi-corporation rivalries, here, Bryan. Logic has nothing to do with it... The market will decide.

*Keep your cards and letters coming to:
Feedback c/o Electronic Games
330 So. Decatur, Ste. 152
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Really. What Could Happen On The World's Greatest Cruise Ship?

Well, it could set sail with lifeboats for only half the passengers aboard. A huge storm could send tsunami tidal waves crashing down against its hull. Lightning could strike and set off several fires on its deck. Its wireless operator's desperate taps of **SOS** could be ignored completely. Worse yet, you could actually be on board!

But hey, keep your head above water; you've got 45,000 tons of ocean liner, not to mention 2,300 people who look to you to keep them from sinking.



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SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

EG HOTLINE

Compiled by Joyce Worley & Ross Chamberlain

Citadel Packs SFX Power

Electro Brain introduced **Citadel**, a 3-D polygonal scenario game using Nintendo's SFX chip to create five worlds. The player takes on the artificial persona of a giant, shape-shifting robot on a quest to reunite the five segments of a mighty AI computer and restore peace to the galaxy.

Electro Brain says this is the first third-party SFX game. It's

programmed by Argonaut, the inventors of the chip and the developers of **StarFox**, and scheduled for release in April.



Electro Brain's Citadel takes full advantage of the SFX chip.

Tetragon Targets Generation X

"We want to publish games oriented toward creativity and using your mind to solve problems."

explained Mark Skaggs, President of Tetragon Inc. "They'll have action and excitement, but not just button pushing. We want to get away from reflex games that rely on how fast you can move your fingers."

The first of the Tetragon titles in development for play on 3DO systems by Generation X, the age 20-30 market, is **Gridders** (working title). The last employee in a fully-automated factory gets a tip there's a secret in the basement. Actual game play involves movement on



the grid that composes the floor, as the gamer manipulates cubes, hexagons and other geometric figures that make use of the 3DO's special capabilities.

Jim Von Ehr, President of Altsys and CEO of Tetragon, had created several games, including **Silmeoids**, for the TI computer in the early

'80s. "The revenue from that actually provided the money to start Altsys," Mark recalled. Asked how they decided to return to gaming, he explained, "We had been watching the game field for some time. It was something we really wanted to do." With the advent of the 3DO, the pair felt the technology was ripe to bring their ideas to life.

The first Tetragon titles will appear in early summer of this year.

Fly the Shuttle To Space and Back

Mallard started work on **Space Clipper**, a combined simulation and adventure game set in the near future, based in part on the Delta Clipper, a new space shuttle under development by McDonnell Douglas.

The single-stage-to-orbit rocket flies into orbit and returns to be refueled and flown again in a short time. Its developers hope it will eventually make space travel safe and economical enough for the average citizen. Mallard President and CEO Steve Greene attended the test flight of a one-third scale model of the shuttle at



the White Sands Missile Range last fall.

Space Clipper, scheduled for release in the 4th quarter this year, is being developed with technical advice from McDonnell Douglas consultant Steve Hoesser. Helping out with the story line is science fiction author Aleta Jackson.

Players fly the commercial space shuttle and may be able to develop and manage a fleet.



Eagle Eye Mysteries helped E*A Kids win a special seal.

E*A Kids Wins Parenting Seal

E*A Kids won The National Parenting Center Seal of Approval for **Scooter's Magic Castle** and **Eagle Eye Mysteries**. "It is quite apparent that the folks at Electronic Arts did their homework," said David Katzner, president of the National Parenting Center.

In **Scooter's Magic Castle**, children guide Scooter through a castle full of games and puzzles. **Eagle Eye Mysteries** has over 50 cases for pre-teens.

Flight Sim Fans Try for Real Thing

Mallard Software, Micro-Wings and SimuFlite are combining to send a gamer into the wild blue yonder. Some lucky flight simulator enthusiast will win a round trip to SimuFlite Training International, a professional pilot and technician simulator training facility at Dallas-Fort Worth, to get classroom training, instruction in a training simulator, and a chance to co-pilot a real Lear jet. Entry forms will be accepted until Feb. 28, 1994.

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Actual screen images.

Aris' MediaClips Convert to MPEG

Aris Entertainment (Video Cube) released its 13th MediaClips multimedia clip art title, *Animal Kingdom*, with MPEG format as well as its standard MPC (Video for



Aris has released its new Animal Kingdom clip art set.

Windows) and Macintosh-compatible (Quick Time) formats, all on one CD-ROM disc. According to Chris Kitz, Aris president, all new MediaClips titles will be published with all three formats, and the entire previous library will be converted to add the MPEG format.

More Airlines Play FlightLink

America West Airlines of Phoenix, AZ, and Carnival Air Lines of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, are among the latest air services to sign up with In-Flight Phone Corp. to install the digital FlightLink passenger communications and entertainment systems on all their craft. Each seat has a viewing screen, a telephone handset with alphanumeric keypad and game controller buttons. There is a one-time charge of \$3 per flight to play video games. In addition to phone service (\$2/minute), FlightLink offers a 9-channel digital radio system with news, sports, music and entertainment, plus fax transmission, stock quotations and other services.

In-Flight also has agreements with airlines and communications services in Europe, Asia and South America, including Russia, Kuwait and El Salvador.

Sega Channel Gets New Connections

Launch of the Sega Channel drew one step closer, when Sega Channel signed General Instrument Corp. and Scientific Atlanta Inc. to design and make some of the equipment to deliver video games over participating cable systems across the country.

The channel will uplink Genesis games (from Sega and its licensed publishers) via satellite to cable headends (used by cable system operators to downlink the signals). The operators will then use specially designed receiver/modulators to pass them on to subscribers who'll be able to select from a menu of 50 games via a special cable adapter that hooks into a Genesis. A 12-market test is scheduled to begin in March.

Psykosnik Stars On X-Kaliber 2097

Activision's *X-Kaliber 2097* (SNES) features a soundtrack by techno rock band Psycho-



sonik and a plot by comic book writer Mark London Williams. Future-punk hero Slash uses the sword X-Kaliber to save Neo New York City from the evil Raptor and his mutant morphs.

The game is scheduled for release in March.

Viacom Plans Pop Culture Games

Al Niilen, VP of Marketing for Viacom New Media, visited EG to sneak preview a couple of new games, and explained their driving philosophy.

"We see three characters for Viacom," Al explained. "First is software publishing. We're not going to license Viacom products out to other publishers. Second is program supplier to our interactive TV group, Castro Valley. Third, interactive Creative Councils. Everyone involved in Viacom will, in effect, become a producer. When they create new TV programs, they'll consider how it can work for the other two media, and cooperate with the game people." He reminded us of the vast entertainment holdings of Viacom, which include Nickelodeon, MTV and Showtime, and a total of over 8500 shows.

Rocko's Modern Life: Spunky's Dangerous Day (Nickelodeon/SNES) is a 16-level labor to keep Spunky alive, and guide him to the four golden hydrants. Rocko goes

ahead of the tiny dog, trying to clear the obstacles, smooth the path, and make it safe for Spunky to pass. There are lots of things, good and bad, to pick up, such as the chili pepper Spunky might eat that would make him move



faster, and balloons which might make him swell up and float. Even the manual is amusing, with puzzles and games, and an artist's sketch book that shows how to draw Rocko, Spunky and Big Earl. This should be ready this spring.

Beavis & Butthead (MTV/Genesis), scheduled for September, is an adventure for one person who controls each alternately, or two players each manipulating one of the pair. Seems a pair of tickets to a totally cool rock concert were torn up and scattered, to be found. The pair can visit Turbo Mall, Drive-In, High School, Hospital, Burger World, and The Street, in a cartooned gritty world that matches the TV program. The controls include one straight from the show: a This Sucks command is what the player uses to get out of the current level. Be careful around fire, kids!



Discovery Channel Plans CD-ROMs

In The Company of Whales is the first in a series of CD-ROM versions of Discovery Channel documentaries. Narrated by Patrick Stewart, it fills 98% of a CD with 80

pages of text, 200 photos, and 40-50 minutes of FMV. Richard Kiley narrates **Beyond Planet Earth**, second in the series.

The Discovery Channel plans to release six multimedia titles, some of which will have games embedded (for example, a flight simulator in the multimedia version of *Wings*.)

WOLF PACK™

Now on CD-ROM!

Since its release, WolfPack™ has set a new standard for submarine simulations. Winner of Tilt Magazine's Tilt D'Or award for best simulation, it has consistently topped the best seller charts, earning raves from the reviewing community.

"WolfPack can only be classified as a genre buster, one of those rare games that sets a new standard for other releases in the same field to live or die by."

Video Games & Computer Entertainment

"The graphics for WolfPack are stunning."
Wargamer

Now WolfPack is available on PC CD-ROM. The same compelling game play of the floppy version allows you to command either a WW2 submarine wolf pack or the surface fleet.

Historically accurate, your weapons and instruments are precisely keyed to the war year that you choose to play. A full construction set is included to allow you to re-create actual battles.

WolfPack CD-ROM also includes:

- 58 new missions, 70 total.
- Over 5 minutes of breathtaking animation sequences.

Pick up a copy at your local software store and find out what underwater warfare is all about.



Actual screen images.

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American Technos Signs With Sega

American Technos signed with Sega of America as a third party developer and publisher for games on the Genesis, Game Gear and Sega CD.

Already a publisher for Nintendo systems and arcade games (**Double Dragon**), American Technos introduced **Popeye** for the SNES, Genesis and Game Gear at the winter CES, as well as **Super Pinball—Behind the Mask** for SNES.

American Technos also recently became the agent for SRS Labs' patented SRS (*) 3-D audio technology. Video games encoded with the audio process do not require extra hardware or decoding for playback through a stereo system. **Double Dragon—the Movie**, under production by Imperial Entertainment, will use the process in its soundtrack.

Gateway Gets Shinghaled

While many travellers prefer to sleep or get work done while on airplanes, Nintendo is following up on its introduction of including video games on passenger jets to help pass the time (or to keep the kids quiet for a few hours during a long flight). A new game is on the way, along with some additional programs.

The Nintendo Gateway System added Activision's **Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye** to its game lineup, one of the first third-party titles included in the interactive entertainment, information and shopping service for plane and cruise ship passengers and hotel guests.

The joint project of Nintendo of America, Lodgenet Entertainment Corp. and Hughes-Avicom International had 10 games in its pilot program, including **Super Mario World**, **Street Fighter II** and **Legend of Zelda**. The pilot program used specially designed SNES systems fitted into armrest panels, with

LCD screens on seatbacks, on some 20 planes in the fleets of Northwest, Virgin and China Air.

EG Readers' Popularity Poll

December 1993

These games were voted the favorites in EG's monthly poll (see last page in this issue). Duplicate numbers represent ties.

Favorite Video Games

1. **Turbo Street Fighter 2**, Capcom
2. **Mortal Kombat**, Acclaim
3. **Super Mario All Stars**, Nintendo

Favorite Computer Games

1. **X-Wing**, LucasArts
2. **Wolfenstein 3-D**, FormGen
2. **Star Trek 25th Anniversary**, Interplay
3. **Leisure Suit Larry 5**, Sierra

Favorite Multimedia Games

1. **Crash 'N Burn**, Crystal Dynamix
1. **Night Trap**, Sega

Favorite Coin-Op

1. **Mortal Kombat**, Acclaim

Acclaim's Duel Demo Wins Graphics Award

Acclaim Entertainment's video **Duel** won a special award at Japan's Nicograph '93, the annual technological exhibition sponsored by the Nippon Computer Graphics Associ-



Acclaim's advanced video techniques won strong praise.

ation. The video, which features a hand-to-hand battle on an alien landscape, shows the proprietary digital actor technology developed by Acclaim's Advanced Technologies Group.

The technique, using scanning, traditional modeling and a proprietary tetherless optical motion capture process, was originally developed as a tool for character animation in interactive entertainment software, but its applications have been expanded to a broader spectrum in the entertainment industry. Its first game application is anticipated for late '94.

C-H Products Fly To PCs

C-H Products' lineup of controllers should keep gamers up in the air. Before the end of the year, the company will introduce rudder pedals for flight simulation and auto racing games, and the **Virtual Pilot Pro**, a desk-mounted yoke controller. The company also has announced that the **Fightstick Pro** has been reconfigured to support **Flight Simulator 5**.

In other news, the **Mac-enjoy Flight** lets IBM sticks be used on Macintosh computers; and the **Jetstick** is a lower priced controller with fewer bells and whistles, made to sell for less than C-H's **Fightstick Pro**.

C-H also announced a licensing agreement with 3DO; the company will be the first manufacturer of 3DO joysticks. This is sure to be an important

decision, as the 3DO continues its strong market push.

Top Video Games As of November 22, 1993

The following figures are provided courtesy of Babbages.

Super NES

1. **Tecmo Super Bowl**, Tecmo
2. **Madden NFL '94**, EA Sports
3. **Super Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back**, JVC
4. **NHL Hockey '94**, EA Sports
5. **NBA Showdown**, EA Sports

Sega Genesis

1. **Madden NFL '94**, EA Sports
2. **NFL Football—Joe Montana**, Sega
3. **Tecmo Super Bowl**, Tecmo
4. **Mortal Kombat**, Acclaim
5. **NHL Hockey '94**, EA Sports

NES

1. **Tetris 2**, Nintendo
2. **TMNT—Manhattan Project**, Konami
3. **Jurassic Park**, Ocean
4. **Tecmo Super Bowl**, Tecmo
5. **Batman Returns**, Konami

Sega CD

1. **Lethal Enforcers**, Konami
2. **AH-3 Thunderstrike**, JVC
3. **Silpheed**, Sega
4. **Secret of Monkey Island**, JVC
5. **Joe Montana's NFL Football**, Sega

Core Goes Indy

Core Design is entering the games market as an independent publisher, after years of affiliations with other companies, and provided a rundown on their lineup for this spring and summer.

One or two players cooperate to save the solar system through 18 play zones in **Skeleton Krew** (Genesis) as the comic book-styled exoskeleton-clad heroes shoot their way through on foot, bike, jet ski and in a submarine. **Battlicorps** (Sega CD) uses the **AH-3 Thunderstrike** engine to send the player across

three 360 degree texture-mapped moons in a Walker. **Soulstar** contains an attack tank, turbo-copter and spaceship, and what is thought to be the first use of 64 colors on the Sega CD. **Bubba 'N' Stix** (Genesis & Sega CD) stars a truck driver who's kidnapped to an alien planet, then befriended by Stix, a stick who'll help Bubba back to earth in a non-violent, cartoon-styled humorous puzzle game. **Trunkski** (Game Gear) stars an elephant cleaning up a valley overrun with hard-hatted, cigar-smoking Rhinos and other amusing animated enemies.

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Mortal Kombat is available for the Amiga and IBM/Tandy & 100% compatible PCs.

MIDWAY

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Compton's Creates Multimedia Up roar

The Compton Bombshell

by Laurie Yates and Joyce Worley

It was as if a bomb had dropped in the Las Vegas Convention Center. Spokesmen for Compton's NewMedia revealed that their company had been granted a far-reaching patent that impacts multimedia databank programs.

A major segment of the computer industry was thrown into turmoil on Nov. 16, 1993, the second day of the Las Vegas Comdex, the computer industry's largest trade show. While the story appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* the previous day, the news that Compton's NewMedia had received Patent Number 5,241,671 did not fully sink in to the convention at large until Compton's press conference.

About the Patent

Patent 671 gives Compton's ownership of "multimedia search system[s] using a plurality of entry path means which indicate interrelatedness of information."

The ownership is extensive, but "there is no intention ... of limiting this invention to the exact abstract or disclosure.... More particularly ...this invention can be used with any information stored in a database."

Compton's applied for the patent on Oct. 26, 1989, after the release of Compton's *Multimedia Encyclopedia*, said to be the first electronic encyclopedia to integrate pictures, sound, motion, and multiple entry paths. Patent Number 5,241,671 was officially awarded on August 31, 1993, and only affects products released after this date.

Compton Offers A Deal

Stanley Frank, president and CEO of Compton's NewMedia is "encourag[ing] developers to use the distribution channels and development tools ...made available to them. Our royalty structure

and distribution options will benefit our licensees."

The options available to other companies include: entering into a strategic joint venture relationship with Compton's NewMedia; entering into a distribution arrangement under the Affiliated Label Program; developing a product using Compton's SmartRetrieve technology; or complying with a royalty structure as set forth by Compton's NewMedia.

Industry Expresses Concern

Industry feedback has not been supportive of this patent. The Interactive Multimedia Association (IMA), a trade coalition of more than 260 organizations, expressed concern over the issuing of "broad, non-technical multimedia patents."



Philip Dodds, IMA Executive Director, ventured: "I expect that the IMA will support legal efforts to limit or overturn this patent," since the search process is common and considered non-proprietary.

Other developers find Compton's expressed desire "to continue to foster the growth of [the multimedia] industry," at odds with the actual effect of the patent, especially in light of the delay of the announcement.

Software Sorcery's president, James R. Jones III observed, "It's unfortunate that many of the most exciting advances in multimedia are being overshadowed by this news. The focus should be on all of the hot new multimedia titles being introduced this year—not on this restrictive patent."

Compton's NewMedia, however, contends that it "simply want[s] the public to

recognize [us] as the pioneer in this industry, [to] promote a standard that can be used by every developer and [to] be compensated for the investments we have made to make multimedia a reality for developers and end-users."

IMA's Dodds, on the other hand, believes "this is one of the most serious developments for the industry as this patent basically claims that Compton's invented multimedia. Some kind of response by the industry—collectively and individually—is needed."

Knowledge Adventure's president and CEO, Rod Turner, argues that the patent will be overturned, but added that "patents are rarely paid for, but are used to trade rights."

Turner contends that, at least for Knowledge Adventure, there really is no significant impact. "We're technologically innovative and we also have patents in process. Compton's just created press interest and industry backlash over their arrogance in the delivery [of the information at the press conference]."

Jones added, "They're setting themselves up to be an adversary to the entire industry. In the end, the only ones who'll come out ahead will be the lawyers."

Examining The Effects

Corporate lawyers throughout the industry are still examining the patent and attempting to come up with suggestions for their clients. As of press time, however, Broderbund, Electronic Arts, MicroSoft, and Grollier Electronic Publishing had firm "No comments"; while Creative Multimedia cited a policy of noninvolvement.

Software Toolworks Chief Technical Officer, Michael Duffy said that they are carefully evaluating the patent. "If we determine that it's valid, and that our products infringe on the patent then we'll talk to Compton's and make some decisions; if we find it to be invalid and a claim is made against one of our products, then we'll stand up for our rights."

The IMA feels that the Patent Office should form an industry commission to review patents pending. Tom Lopez, IMA President, noted that "until the patent office is able ...to incorporate the unique expertise required ...this would be the best way to ensure that the patents hold up to close examination from those that understand the industry and technologies the best: those in the multimedia industry."

Whatever the outcome, once the dust settles, the landscape of multimedia will be permanently altered.



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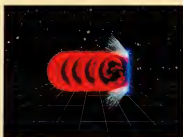
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Depth Perception

by Jay Carter

Despite all the rumblings, and there are many, regarding game violence and issues of censorship—when one looks at the pure entertainment value of what is being produced today, there is one element that comes shining through. By all assessments the popularity of all electronic games might be attributable to an increased awareness by the playing public at large. However, that's only the tip of the iceberg.

One need only look under the hood to discover that the engines driving all the creativity are providing better graphic presentations, along with more fully orchestrated special effects, including musical scores and speech. But even this doesn't get to the heart of the matter.

Going back to the appearance of the first text adventures introduced over a decade ago for the higher end computer systems, not the available game system platforms, what slowly emerged was the notion of more fully articulated and involved story lines. Titles such as *Zork* and *Ultima* became legendary because of their scope and the way they drew in players for weeks at a time.

More contemporary efforts including the *Zelda* series, *Phantasy Star* and so



many, many others only helped to broaden the horizons of what one might experience. This success in the home triggered similar applications in the world of coin-op. The problem for the latter was one of harnessing game play depth and complexity into an entertainment package that strives to give more instant gratification in isolated portions.

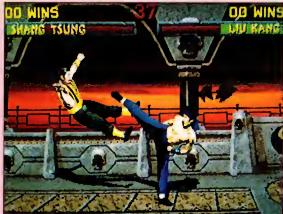
Over the past few years, technological advances have allowed coin-op designers and programmers to push their developmental envelope, but the stellar attractions that are ruling family entertainment

centers everywhere tend to share one common ingredient above and beyond a solid play mechanic. And that is sheer depth and dimensionality of plot, story line, overall objectives and the anticipated discovery of hidden layers and secret elements that fascinate, frustrate and challenge our gaming abilities.

In Midway's *Mortal Kombat II*, arguably the game

of the new year, there is the recognition that, along with multiple fatalities, more secret combinations, new characters and hidden characters, what we have is a logical extension of the first story line rather than just an add-on to what has existed before.

We are transported to the battle-scarred realm of the Outworld and discover that Shang Tsung was only doing the bidding for Shao Kahn. Now the



Mortal Kombat II lives up to its wild and crazy reputation with exciting action.

tournament has new meaning as does our understanding and relationship with the returning combatants and a cast of new, more deadly challengers. The landscape has been established, as has the

They've got a bullet with your name on it.



We're talking high-caliber criminals—Al "Scarface" Capone, Frank Nitti, the Genna boys . . . If you're going to mess with the most notorious outlaws of the 20th century, you'd better be Untouchable.
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You're Eliot Ness, a former D.A. It's only natural that you're called in for a hostage rescue at the County Courthouse.



Ness, you gotta go this one alone. Capone's trigger-happy henchmen are bottling with a rival mob for territorial rights.

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SUPER NINTENDO
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connection for the game player attempting to master all of **Mortal Kombat II**'s nuances and subtleties. But it is the depth and the presentation that helps to draw us in and keep us coming back for more.

For pinball players, although it would be simplistic to think of a much more static universe, each of the manufacturers have been influenced by the success of video games to the extent that what appears on the surface is just that. It is only the surface, beneath which lies various strategies, rules and specific objectives tied into individual story lines. The result is has been an out-pouring of "mode-based" machines, many of which represent probably the best examples of the art form in its long history.

Data East has captured the non-stop excitement of **Last Action Hero** with Arnold Schwarzenegger leading the way through thirteen different mini-game adventures that tag back onto the movie story line. Take hold of the Ruger Blackhawk .45 Caliber Pistol grip and launch a ball into play, listening to the background music of AC/DC, Queensryche and Megadeth while you attempt to rescue Danny, load balls into the Super Crane and survive the onslaught of six-ball multiple ball play.

In **Judge Dredd**, the latest Bally pinball from Midway, players meet Britain's most popular comic book character and then are taken to the 22nd century where they must restore peace in the perilous crime-riddled world of Mega-City One. Mete out your own brand of instant justice in a universe of triple-deck wire

ramps, rotating Deadworld Multi-Ball staging area, Space Station Robotic Arm, triple captive ball, ten different Chain Feature game modes and the ultimate battle against the four dark Judges.

The first Bally pinball to utilize the advanced Digital Compression System (DCS) for an extraordinary soundscape, **Judge Dredd** also serves up a remarkable first for players with the introduction of a SuperGame option. For two credits, game rules change dramatically to propel you instantly into multi-ball action at the start of every turn and the chance for multiple jackpot scoring along with six-ball

of four flippers, multiple ramps and a host of combination shots in order to make your way through a pyramid of six distinct game modes. Accomplish this and it's time for **The Beast's** Challenge for Jackpots and Increased Scoring values.

In Alvin G. & Company's **Mystery Castle** pinball, you're on a scavenger hunt to collect fifteen different items in order to achieve the most prized, Crown. Once again, typical playfield features are transformed into different icons with unique modes that will take you down secret doors and multiple ramps on your quest.

For the legions of Trekkers out there, Williams' all-new **Star Trek: The Next Generation** boldly goes where no pinball has ever gone before. It's warp speed ahead with eight different U.S.S. Enterprise missions as you try to forge your way to the Final Frontier and an experience of six-ball multi-ball play. Along your journey there may be encounters in the Neutral Zone with Romulans, Ferengi or Cardassians and a visit to the Holodeck will transport you into a video game mode that unfolds on the machine's Dot Matrix Display.

In addition, **Star Trek: The Next Generation** features a variety of secret modes, left and right "probe launchers," a fully-functional Borg ship with the ability to fire balls back onto the playfield, and custom speech from eight of the series' cast members, not to mention the show's theme music for a faithful adaptation that captures the energy and excitement of what has become a true intergalactic phenomenon.

Next time around we'll continue to look at the effects of game depth as it pertains to the latest video games. So until then, as always, keep on playing, keep on having fun and remember to check **EG** for the latest gaming info!



multi-ball play. Premier Technology keeps the ball rolling with their **Gladiators** pinball under the Gottlieb banner. In this futuristic fantasy themed game, the objectives here include maneuvering through a landscape

DOWN BEHIND ENEMY LINES...

NAME: JOHN E. WARREN

RANK: SERGEANT

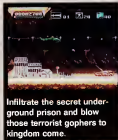
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SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

GAME GEAR

WARREN

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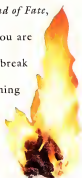


the offbeat, young mystic who must voyage to the center of the world to break the spell. Out of sync and out on foot, your aberrant journey reveals nothing

is what it isn't. And one hand.



seems. Everything is what it you can count your friends on Literally. Conspiring to push



the twisted edge of cinemagraphic entertainment, Westwood Studios has designed more puzzles and gameplay in the first few chapters of

The Hand of Fate
The Legend of Kyrandia
advanced graphics



than in all of The most



on the market are first pencil tested, then painted on-screen to surrealistic perfection. Breakthrough

Trulight technology illuminates each scene more cinematically for a fuller, fourth



Shadow



Sunlight

dimensional picture. The new

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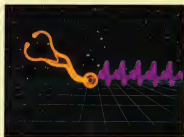
over 50 characters to change your mind, mood and mayhem based on preceding events. Don't just play with your mind. Change the way your mind plays.

Grasp *The Hand of Fate* and kiss conventional logic goodbye.

THE HAND OF FATE

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STUDIOS

WESTWOOD
STUDIOS
Viggo



GAME DOCTOR

Back to the Classics!

Greetings and salutations, cybergamers, the Doctor is in.

Some old business first. On the pronunciations of the various **Street Fighter II** character names, I have been told that the Japanese actually say "Ryu" as "Roo" and Zangief as "Jon-Geef." However, since Zangief is supposed to be Russian, my Russian experts insist it is "Jon-Gee-Eff." Of course, the only thing that makes them Russian experts is that they've played more **Tetris** than I have, so the subject will remain open.

Now, on with the Qs:

Q: My question concerns the date of release of some older programmable video game systems, specifically those between 1976 and 1980. The Fairchild Channel F and RCA Studio II seem to be pretty much agreed on as being first sold to consumers in 1976. The Bally Professional Arcade, Atari 2600, Odyssey² and Intellivision are where sources disagree as to year of release or when shown at a Consumer Electronics Show.

Being the Guru of Games, the Potentate of Potentiometers and the Reverend of High Resolution, I thought you could perhaps clear it up for me. Also, what were the retail prices of all the above systems when released?

W. Jayson Hill
Knoxville, TN

A: The Potentate of Potentiometers,

eh? Okay, Mr. Hill, let's see what we can do for you. I'll go along with 1976 as the release year for the RCA Studio II, a wretched black & white game system, and the Fairchild Channel F, which was later purchased by Zircon.

The same source cites 1978 as the year that the Bally Professional Arcade (later known as the Bally Home Arcade and, later still, as the Bally Astrocade), the Atari 2600, and Odyssey² were released. The Intellivision arrived in stores in 1980 and, though you didn't ask, the Coleco-Vision debuted in 1982. Also, to the



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"Lots of games push the envelope—Under a Killing Moon blows it to smithereens!"

—William Trotter, *PC Entertainment*

"A ground breaking CD adventure!"

—Joyce Worley, *Electronic Games*

"Under a Killing Moon combines the best elements of movies and computer games... It literally pulls you into the screen."

—Denny Atkin, *Entertainment Editor, Compute Magazine*

This category-creating Interactive Movie from ACCESS Software goes light years beyond any other product labeled "interactive." *Under a Killing Moon* takes you to the streets of post World War III San Francisco and casts you into the role of Tex Murphy, Private Investigator, who first appeared in *Mean Streets*, then *Martian Memorandum*. *Under a Killing Moon* is a Virtual World full of people and places so richly detailed, you'll feel like you're actually there.

best of my knowledge, video game companies did not participate in CES prior to 1979.

As for the prices... yes, that was rather difficult. Coming as close as possible, I believe the Studio II, Channel F, Atari 2600, and

Odyssey2 all retailed for approximately \$200. The Bally and Intellivision systems were somewhat more upscale and cost in the \$300 range.

Q: I'm relatively new to video and computer games, but I'm amazed to see that you've been writing a column as the "Game Doctor" for 12 years! That's amazing. But I'm curious: what was the very first question you ever answered?

Ron Balfe
Santa Cruz, CA

A: Yeah, I know, Ron—it seems like a long time to me, too. But that's a cute question; in fact, no one's ever asked it before! So, I went back to the very first column I ever wrote and plucked out the very first question. Which was: "Do video games hurt TV sets?" This was a big fear in the late '70s, because some early Pong-type systems actually did hurt TVs! The dotted vertical line which ran down the center of the screen in several of the dedicated systems was so bright and stationary, it literally burned the image onto the screen. We've all learned a lot

since then, and since the arrival of the first generation programmable systems in 1978, this problem is unheard of. By the way, the burn-in effect is the reason we use screen savers on computers.

Q: Doctor, I have just about everything a 28-year-old could ask for. I have a beautiful wife, a new house, a new car, a great job flying planes for the Navy, lots of toys, full sized Asteroids, Battlezone, and Zaxxon, a collection of eleven guitars, and an amp that goes to "11."

But there is something missing. I have wanted a Vectrex since 1982, but I have been unsuccessful in making this dream a reality. You have written about this system often and I want to know where I can find that elusive, "Maltese" Vectrex!

Dean M. Collins
Norfolk, VA

A: I have a Vectrex, Dean, and I will definitely trade it to you for your beautiful wife, a pre-CBS Fender Stratocaster and that Asteroids coin-op. But seriously, fans of the Vectrex and other old video game systems, should check out The New VideoGame Trader from Jerry Greiner, aka Jerry G. Visionaries, at 14700 NW Bonneville Loop, Beaverton, OR 97006. The first issue costs \$2.50 and contains not only technical and layman's information on the Vectrex and Bally Professional Arcade, but a great selection of old video games and related materials for sale.

Also, Dean, thanks for the Lifting Eagles sticker and keep 'em flying!

And that about wraps things up for this month. Next month we'll be back to up-to-the-minute questions, but this shorter column seemed a good place to handle these "classic" questions.

Anyway, remember to send those Qs to:

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ABOUT KNOWING THE NAME OF THE GUY
TRYING TO RIP YOUR HEAD OFF
THAT MAKES IT MORE PERSONAL."**

JOE MONTANA

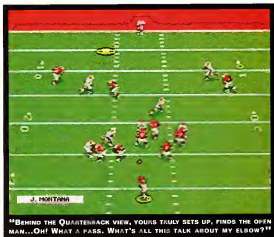


**"MY MAN JERRY RICE, HAULS IN ANOTHER. NICE
PASS STEVE, I TAUGHT HIM EVERYTHING HE KNOWS!"**



**"BARRY SANDERS WITH A 'SPEED BURST' DOWN
THE SIDE LINE, ONLY ONE OFFENDER LEFT (TOAST)."**

“GUYS LIKE BRUCE SMITH, JUNIOR SEAU, REGGIE WHITE AND CORTEZ KENNEDY. IN MADDEN '94 ALL YOU



GET IS THEIR NUMBERS. MY GAME'S GOT COOL STUFF LIKE DIGITIZED PLAYER MOVEMENTS, SIX PLAYABLE VIEWS, SPEED BURSTS, A ZOOM

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HEAR THE PLAY BY PLAY COMMENTARY.

WATCH FROM THE NEW *BEHIND THE QUARTERBACK VIEW*. AND LEARN FROM THE *TRUE PLAY CALLING PHILOSOPHY* OF EACH NFL TEAM. JUST GO EASY ON ME, OKAY? ”



SEGA
SPORTS

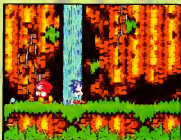
WE SWEAT THE DETAILS.™

SONIC 3PEAT!

When something is a success, it is standard procedure for a company to play it to death. A single good movie will beget sequel after mediocre sequel. Most of all, a tired game concept will be replayed time and time again for a audience that has bounced off of millions of heads, jumped from platform to repetitive platform, and has searched every nook and cranny of known space for hidden areas.

So what is it about **Sonic 3** that makes it such an amazing game?

It's not like Sega has reinvented Sonic with this latest offering. Many of the same tried and true functions are in place. Of course there have been some enhancements, most notably those of additional, never before seen power-ups.



Introducing the latest member of the Sonic family—Knuckles!

There are more shields, ones that not only protect Sonic but provide specific functions as well.

For instance, the Water Shield allows Sonic to stay underwater for an indefinite period of time, without having to search for the random water bubbles to breath.

There is also a Lightning Shield which will not only protect Sonic, but also act as a magnet for rings. Instead of having to jump right over the rings, with the Lightning Shield, all Sonic has to do is get near them and the rings will float toward him.

There are also some new devices to interact with in the levels. Pulleys that will pull Sonic along a mountain, wheels which must be turned in order to make the proper route appear, and even a cannon for Sonic to climb in and blast himself to new heights!

There is also a new character in the

latest version of Sonic. He goes by the name of Knuckles, and although we haven't gotten the full story about why he is hanging around, inside sources indicate that Knuckles is here to stay.

While **Sonic 3** may not offer much in the way of a completely original game, it does expand on an already popular series.

Great care has been taken to insure

that this is the largest Sonic game ever. With six worlds to explore and several levels on each world to conquer, this game presents quite a challenge for even an experienced gamer.

Plus, there is a whole new, 3-D, rotating, bonus round that will have players running in circles wondering which way to turn next.

Although the soundtrack was not

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



complete at the time of this writing, it was emphasized that Sega is putting as much time into making it perfect as it has the rest of the game.

If all of the bells and whistles weren't enough, Sega has included a Two-player Mode (split screen with its own levels like **Sonic 2**) where you can play as Sonic, Tails, or Knuckles. There is also a Save Game Mode, where several games in progress can be saved for future play. Players are no longer forced to replay levels that have already been beaten.

When the game is beaten, it is possible for players to choose which level they want to play at any time.

So while everyone seems to be getting tired of sequels; tired of more of the same old thing, Sega has betrayed us all. They have given forth a sequel that is outstanding in every way. They have taken away our chance to complain that the game companies don't really care about the product that they put out, as long as there is a market to buy the same old thing.

Darn you Sega—how dare you make a sequel this good!

— Marc Camron

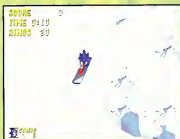
All New Wonderful Worlds



Angel Island Zone



Marble Garden Zone

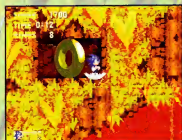


Ice Cap Zone



Launch Base Zone

Bonus Level



To get to the Bonus Round, find the secret passage and grab the giant ring.



In the Bonus Round, Sonic must grab all of the blue balls and avoid the red ones.

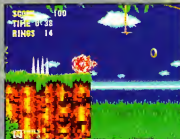
Super Sonic Power-Ups



Temporary Invincibility



Water Shield



Fire Shield



Lightning Shield



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like you're in the room with them. Which, in a way, you are. What does all this TruVideo™ stuff mean? It means your optic nerves are in for a workout. It means you should go try these games. It means you may soon be wearing your hair differently. It means these games are indeed the next level. It means 110 volts never felt so good.

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1994 EG GAME AWARDS

Publishers mastered the 16-Bit, pushed the 486 envelope, and got serious about multimedia. The increased number of citations in many categories testifies to how hard it was for us to separate the great from the merely good. So does our decision to nominate a game in only one category.

Last year, EG caused a sensation among gaming magazines by giving the final say to gamers. It worked so well that we're doing it again this year. This article introduces all the candidates for this year's awards and explains why we believe they merit this distinction.

Now it's your turn. The last page of this section is a ballot. Check off your choices, mail it back to us by the deadline (Feb. 10, 1994), and then check the April issue of Electronic Games to find out whether your choices agree with the verdict of the electronic gaming nation.

Best Action Video Game

Batman Returns! (Konami/Genesis) is a platform game with exquisite graphics

licensed in conjunction with the Tim Burton 1992 movie sequel. It is difficult to keep side scrollers from acquiring a certain sameness, but *Batman Returns!* surrounds decent, if ordinary, play-action with arresting graphics and painstaking animation. The way Batman swirls his cape at foes in the best Dark Knight manner speaks volumes about the insightful attention devoted to making this a Batman cartridge to remember.

Cool Spot (Sega-Virgin/Genesis) is one of the most delightful side scrollers you can pop into Sega's 16-Bit console.

Unlike the earlier computer game, this eight-megabit entry is an action adventure in which the 7-Up character fights an amusing cast of creatures capable of making Spot die laughing. The graphics, especially the seamless animation and lush backgrounds, have drawn many admiring comments of critics and players. The sound is absolutely wonderful, meshing beautifully with the cartoon visuals.



Cool Spot jumped from 7-Up bottles to gaming screens with a colorful game.

Final Fight 2 (Capcom/SNES) picks up where the first title in the series ends in more ways than one. The plot is a continuation of the earlier coin-op and home cartridge, but new characters, an artistic facelift, and improved play-action put the sequel among 1993's standouts. The player controls Hagar, Maki or Carlos in this six-level tour of Hong Kong and Europe. The characters are large and capable of pulling off lots of moves, and the flicker that marred *Final Fight* is just a memory. Many who aren't deeply enmeshed in the mystique of fighting games find the one-button control in *Final Fight* a good compromise; tremendous hand-to-hand fighting with the need to memorize a list of controller configurations.

First Samurai (Kemco/SNES) could've degenerated into just another side-scrolling fighting festival, but this 4-Meg



The Wizard Mage battles his enemy, the vicious Demon King, in *First Samurai*.

These are the Candidates—now YOU pick the winners!

by the Editors of Electronic Games

What an incredible gaming year! That was the unanimous verdict when our editors got together to pick the outstanding video, computer, multimedia and portable games of 1993. Break-through titles were rarer than in 1992, but quality and quantity both soared.



Final Fight 2 continued the story of the earlier games and created a deep plot.

cartridge rises above the product glut with a fascinating story and superior implementation. The struggle of the immortal Wizard Mage against his undying nemesis, the Demon King, fuels the five levels of side-scrolling combat. The Wizard Mage can only work in conjunction with a gifted mortal. When the Demon King assassinates the old Sensei, the partially trained First Samurai walks the vengeance trail through. He's got to defeat a legion of minions while avoiding deadly traps to confront the author of all the trouble.

Road Rash II (Electronic Arts/Genesis) is two-player motorcycle racing action with a definite kick—the ones you'll give and get from opponents as you roar toward the finish line.

Best Adventure/RPG Computer Game

Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix/PC) portrays its immense game world in first-person perspective. It's an interactive sequel to Raymond Feist's popular Riftwar series that reprises familiar characters and introduced some new ones. Producer John Cutter, an award-winner for his sports simulations, guided the Krondor team through the development of Dynamix's first FRP disk. A new interface, lavish graphics, and a fascinating, cohesive plot distinguishes this fine effort.

Etetam (Capstone/PC) spins the story of a 29th century bounty hunter, Don Jonz, whose vacation trip to a planet-sized amusement resort turns sour when his foe Mikhail Nuke seized the place. The keyboard control system is an unusual choice for a 1993 product, but the low-tech system couldn't be simpler to manipulate. One plus for this game-system is that it ends the need to methodically examine every item in each location, which enables the adventurer to concentrate on the content instead of the rules.

Lands of Lore (Westwood Studios/PC) adds to this developer's adventure/RPG credits that already include Eye of the Beholder and Kyrandia. This mammoth game has a nearly transparent icon interface, excellent artwork and an involving plot. Scotia is a remarkable creation, a notable new villainess. The company tried to make Lands of Lore accessible to casual player as well as hardcore questers. The highest skill setting will challenge experienced adventurers, but even new newcomers will have considerable success at the lowest one.

Realms of Arkania: Blade of Destiny (Sir Tech/PC) proves that smart publishers, unlike the proverbial old dog, can be taught new tricks. SirTech, put aside its Wizardry template, at least temporarily, to create a role-playing game with a fresh feel. Based on a German non-electronic RPG, it presents the quest to recover an enchanted blade that can drive back invading orcs in visual terms. The game shows combat in two-thirds overhead perspective, not a boring line of text. The large illustrations on each character's data screen also rate a rave, as does its magic system with more than 200 possible incantations.



Realms of Arkania: Blade of Destiny featured a powerful new magic system.

Space Quest 5 (Dynamix-Sierra On-Line), designed by one of those guys from Andromeda, Mark Crowe, uses rotoscoping to achieve a visual realism that effectively balances the warped lot and strange characters. Newly commissioned space pilot Roger Wilco, previously an interstellar janitor, must stop a putrid plan to turn planets into toxic waste dumps. Along the way he meets satirical versions of many famous characters from other, more somber science fiction epics, like Captain Quirk.

Ultima Underworld II (Origin Systems/PC) puts a first-person perspective on the Ultima game world in a sequel that far exceeds its best-selling predecessor. Programming techniques



The kingdom's feast is about to be interrupted in **Ultima Underworld II**.

developed for flight simulators yield an exciting RPG with 360-degree movement. When the sinister Guardian attacks the castle, the Avatar discovers a gateway that leads to strangely parallel adventures on eight alien worlds. The game system incorporates an elaborate magic system with 49 spells divided into eight circles. The display is nearly one-third larger than the prior program, but speed and detail don't suffer at all.

Best Sports Video Game

Mutant League Football (Electronic Arts/Genesis) presents arcade gridiron action between teams stocked with monsters and mutants on a vertically—scrolling field like the one in its near cousin, **John Madden Football**. More significantly, **Mutant League Football** benefits from years of development spent on the Madden series. This is a playable and competitive arcade simulation, not just a creature-filled furfest. The passing system and play selection interface help create a game that can be enjoyed for seasons to come.

NHL '94 (EA Sports/SNES, Genesis) is the latest in the long-running series from Electronic Arts' hot sports division. New features include 4-way play, new animations, penalty shots, hot and cold streaks, one-timer shots (the pass and shot-on-net are invoked with a single command) and best of all, an optional boxed trading card set with designer tips and player information! And for the first time in the history of EA Sports games, the SNES edition actually beats the Genesis, with vivid graphics and killer sound effects.

Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing (Gameltek/SNES) tests driving skill with an international tour of 16 courses. The cockpit view of the race, quick execution speed, and simple customizing system make this the best new racing cartridge of 1993. A driver can either start a race from the back of the



pack or, by running a qualifying heat, gain a better position when the real competition begins. Well-programmed artificial intelligence provides a machine-directed field of drivers of all skill levels, so that the gamer can translate improved performance into a higher finish in the four-to-six lap races.

Riddick Bowe Boxing (Extreme/SNES) enjoyed more success in 1993 than its namesake, who lost to Evander Holyfield in a rematch that was like one long high-light film. After fully customizing the characteristics and appearance of a novice professional, the video gamer fights through 25 ranked contenders to earn a bout with Bowe. The boxers, depicted from the hip up, punch with realistic form. A long view of the ring supplements the main display, which



NHL Hockey '94 revamped the famous EA title, with more stats and options.

makes footwork and ring generalship more important than in other games based on a close-up view of the fistic action.

WWF Royal Rumble (LJN/Genesis) is based on the main match at any annual pay-TV event. Randomly selected grapplers enter the ring one at a time, and then everyone fights until the last man remains inside the ring. Accurately drawn wrestlers, each with a personalized finishing hold, compete in a wide variety of matches. The 12 mat men included in the game are fully representative of their flesh-and-blood counterparts in the World Wrestling Federation. There's even realistic outside-the-ring action, including provision for the dreaded chair shot.

Tony LaRussa Baseball (EA Sports/Genesis) is an irresistible blend of sports action and statistical authenticity. Although the gamer can sit back and just manage, letting the artificial intelligence guide the on-screen athletes or take direct command with the controller. Special features include a visible bullpen and a spotlight that makes it much easier to track the flight of batted balls. The use of real teams and players, plus true-to-life stadlums, gives Tony LaRussa Baseball the right major league look, and the interactions between batter and pitcher evoke the excitement and strategic interplay of the real thing.

Best Electronic Gaming Audio/Visual Effects

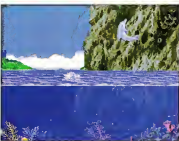
Ecco (Sega/Genesis) is one of the year's most innovative video games. The underwater scenery, sophisticated animation and supporting music and sound effects lures the player into the world of this action-adventure's dolphin hero. This side-scroller sends Ecco on a multi-part quest with a succession of problems and situations that yield hours of fascinating entertainment. Absence of a time-limit encourages experimentation, and it's fun to temporarily abandon the mission to watch Ecco swim, leap and dive through his watery domain. Ecco has a beauty and grace well beyond most other electronic games.

Jurassic Park (Sega/Genesis) blew everyone away with its special effects in the Spielberg 1993 movie box office record-setter. So it seems fitting that the cartridge version of Michael Crichton's novel about the recreation of the dinosaurs has earned so much praise for its audiovisual effects. The player can become Dr. Grant, whose goal is to escape, or an enraged Raptor who destroys as much as possible. Not only do the game's dinosaurs look like the

ones in the movies, but the characters are all very skillfully drawn and nicely animated.

The Myst (Broderbund/Macintosh CD), by the same development team that produced **Cosmic Osmo** and **The Manhole**, demonstrates the continuing evolution of first-person adventures in the multimedia environment. No game has made better use of QuickTime full motion video sequences than **The Myst**. The designers have integrated them with the other graphics so well that **The Myst** avoids the jarring effect caused by crude FMV in other games.

Super Strike Eagle (MicroProse/PC) has all the action and playability of earlier titles in this fight simulator series, but its audiovisual fireworks have drawn the most praise. Scott Patterson and Jeffrey



A colorful mammal is a happy mammal. Ecco introduced incredible graphics.

Briggs have composed pulse-pounding music that makes combat seem even more exciting. The digitized stereo sound effects surround players with thunderous feeding on dogfight and ground assault missions.

Terminator 2029 (Bethesda Software) brings the characters and background story of the action movie hits to interactive gaming in a solitaire action contest that recounts facets of the Terminator saga not revealed in the two films. Mechanized killers prowl the apocalyptic battlefield of the 21st century. The concussive music and stark visual images combine to evoke the terrifying future.

Ultrabots (Nova Logic/PC) requires players to painstakingly pre-plan their strategy, but the action is incandescent when the giant robots clash on the futuristic battlefield. After some practice with the Scout, Humanoid and Scorpion robots, the player tracks sites of possible conflict and rushes to counterattack aliens equipped with the same gear. The sound and graphics are great, but it's the extremely detailed world that makes Ultrabots such a special title.

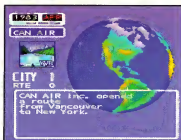


Best Action Strategy/ Strategy Video Game

Aerobiz (Koel/SNES), a jewel in the publisher's executive series, is a simulation of another kind of air warfare, the economic struggle among airlines for economic supremacy. There are 22 world capitals that need service, and the player, who sets up the most profitable routes while controlling expenses, dominates. **AeroBiz** doesn't have dogfights, of course, but many have found that the intricate business model that underlies **AeroBiz** can be nearly as exciting as bombs bursting in air. The five levels of difficulty insure that **AeroBiz** provides a brain-stretching experience for one to four video gamers.

Jungle Strike (EA/Genesis) is the action-combat sequel to *Desert Strike*, the 1993 megahit. The locale is really different this time, though, as the solo pilot battles the son of the previously defeated dictator and his druglord ally. Missions range from the defense of Washington, D.C. against terrorists to a jungle sortie in which the Super Comanche attack helicopter must fire tracers to illuminate targets.

The Lost Vikings (Interplay/SNES) is a thinking player's arcade game. When three brothers (Beleg, Olaf and Erik) are kidnapped by an intergalactic zoo-keeper named Tomator, they must pool their



Aerobiz challenges players to start their own airline, literally from the ground up.

abilities to escape from the ship and return to their original place and time. In game terms, this means that you must switch control from character to character, combining their abilities to solve some tricky puzzles. Interplay worked out this concept with appealing graphics, especially the elaborate animations.

Shadowrun (Data East/SNES), developed by Beam Software, is a startling mixture of science and sorcery. The player awakens in a future in which the sudden reappearance of magic and cyber technology have brought order out of chaos. Finding how you wound up in the morgue is the quest in this action-adventure. Excellent graphics and a streamlined user interface, plus plenty of combat, make **Shadowrun** an exciting science fantasy experience.

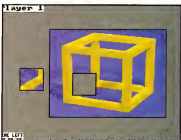
Super Bomberman (Hudson Soft/SNES) is packaged with Hudson Soft's five-player adapter for the Nintendo console, so players can experience the full power of this fast and exciting multi-player contest. Its six worlds, divided into more than 50 levels, furnishes a wide range of strategic challenges, as players bomb their way to the next level, eliminating hostile creatures in their path. The graphics establish a new yardstick for this series, the sound effects contribute audio feedback for key



The sequel to *Desert Strike* brought exciting game play and great graphics.

game events, and the play-action must be experienced. Despite a few rough edges, it is this playability that has caused hardcore gamers to make **Super Bomberman** a cult favorite.

X-Men (Sega/Genesis) earned the respect of comic fans by conveying the flavor of Marvel Comics' super mutant team. The game combines the powers of super-doers like Wolverine, Nightcrawler, Psylops and Gambit to get through the zones in this side-scrolling platform game. Each X-Man wields unique super powers, and there are five other heroes and heroines who can save the day at crunch time. Scarce power ups and an over supply of baddies make **X-Men** a rugged solo contest, but it is exceptionally entertaining with two players.



Flix Mix, by Celeris, was a puzzle game released that utilized fancy graphics.

Best Strategy Computer Game

Flix Mix (Celeris/PC) is a new lease on life for electronic jigsaw puzzles. Not only is the final scene animated, but each piece displays movement even before the user fits it into the frame. Excellent music, including Mendelssohn's "The Spinning Song" and "Bach Fugue No. 5," fits each of puzzles. The publisher has already brought out a second disk with even more impressive puzzles, so **Flix Mix** is well-posed to become a hit with electronic puzzlers.

Kasparov's Gambit (Electronic Arts/PC) is based on **Socrates 2.0**, the winner of the 1993 World Computer Chess Championship, so you know it's capable of playing Grand Master-level games. Its teaching features are the strength that raise it to nomination level. Quizzes and Tutorial, when used with the library of great games, will help almost any chess player improve. There's even a running commentary in which the chess great hovers in a window above the board like Kasparov the friendly



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"Not since Zelda and Soul Blazer has there been an action RPG like Shadowrun!"

— DieHard Game Fan, June 1993

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— Video Games & Computer Entertainment, May 1993

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— Game Informer, May/June 1993



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ghost, dispensing wisdom to pawn and rook-pushers.

The Even More Incredible Machine (Sierra) is Jeff Tunnell's inspired sequel to early 1993's **Incredible Machine**. Each of the playfields in this contemplative puzzle program requires the gamer to set up features in such a way as to forge a safe path across the screen to the exit. Once the pieces are positioned as desired, the crunch comes when the whole scene animates to demonstrate failure or success. Tunnell has obviously tapped into a sensational concept, since **More Incredible Machines** already has a sequel with more variations in store for 1994.

Stronghold (SSI/PC) is the most imaginative use of the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* license in interactive electronics. Though it is set in the same gameworld as many of SSI's adventures and RPGs, **Stronghold** is a demanding strategy contest in which the player rules a kingdom. A wise monarch can lead his homeland to dominance and ascend the imperial throne. It takes more than military prowess, though. The ruler must supervise agriculture, capital construction, taxation and many other factors associated with running a well-ordered kingdom. Excellent graphics, enhanced with non-stutter scaling, puts something interesting on the screen besides the all-important numbers.

Syndicate (EA-Bullfrog/PC) is a solitaire strategy game that puts the computerist at the head of a mega-corporation in a capitalistic future society. The action phase looks and plays better than Bullfrog's two all-time greats, *Populous* and *Powermonger*. Like all classic games, *Syndicate* is relatively easy to learn, but difficult to master.



The Even More Incredible Machine adds more puzzles and fun to the original.

Best Action/Action-Strategy Computer Game

Eight-Ball Deluxe (Ametex/Macintosh) is an electronic simulation of the fabled pinball machine of the same name. It is hard to imagine how an electronic game could be more faithful to its inspiration than this lovingly crafted tribute to the silverball. Although the graphics are somewhat small on the non-scrolling play screen, their exactitude has evoked awe among fans of the electro-mechanical unit. The ball physics are similiary accurate. **Eight-Ball Deluxe** feels like a pinball table, the ultimate accolade for a simulation.

Humans (Gametek/PC) is a lighthearted look at prehistoric human society. The player becomes leader of a tribe of 12 humans who must be guided through discoveries and adventures. Each level is completed when the band either discovers something, like fire or the wheel, or use a tool to accomplish some crucial task. Cute artwork and animation give this side-perspective program a lot of character.

Lemmings II: The Tribes (Psygnosis/PC) shows there is still plenty of life in the idea that rocketed the original *Lemmings* to spectacular popularity two years ago. DMA, the designer/developer, has discovered that there are 11 other tribes besides the one we already knew, and that each has distinctive attributes. The player shepherds the 60 members of each tribe through 10

perilous levels to get them to the ark for a necessary evacuation of Lemming Island. Despite the added complications of 50 different powers, **Lemmings II** retains its greatest strength, unexcelled playability.

Prince of Persia 2 (Broderbund/PC) finds Jaffar springing a deadly trap in which he has taken on the Prince's appearance and the Prince now looks like a common beggar. To rescue his beloved, the Prince must use wits and fists to trek through five environments comprising 15 levels. The upgraded game system sports superb animation and some amazing new moves for the hero, including the ability to astrally project. Designer Jordan Mechner redefined the platform genre with **Prince of Persia**, and now he extends and perfects that breakthrough with this sterling fantasy.

Stunt Island (Disney/PC) is a simulation and activity toy in one tidy package. This exceptional solitaire product turns the computerist into a movie stunt supervisor. These sequences can be edited using an easily learned interface, saved to disk, and traded with other stunt-mavens. After mastering the methodology and execution, you can strive for glory in the Stuntman of the Year tournament. This is a grueling 32-event test guaranteed to separate the stunt acers from mere pretenders.

Tornado (Spectrum Holobyte/PC) is an uncompromising flight simulator from the publisher of the *Falcon* games. This time, the player climbs into the cockpit



Tornado was developed with careful attention to aircraft detail and handling.

of the Tornado, a hot British fighter that wins kudos in many real-life international competitions. Armchair aviators can choose either the ground attack or air defense versions of this aircraft for use in the program's fine selection of missions. **Tornado** is playable over the modem, so pilots will never lack for opposition when they want to soar into the unfriendly skies of air combat.

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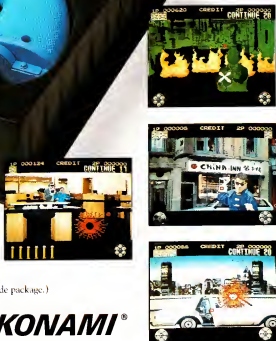
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Note: Screen shots shown are for Sega formats.

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KONAMI®



Console Multimedia Game of the Year

Exile: Wicked Phenomenon (TTI/Duo) chronicles the further adventures of Sadler with arcade and role-playing sequences. Also on hand are other characters from the first game, such as Rumi the female assassin and Faktyle, Sadler's magician friend and chief advisor. Side-scrolling action alternates with modified overhead sequences in which Sadler can find out valuable information by talking with villagers. The interface is fairly standard, but works flawlessly in this enjoyable fantasy adventure.

Lethal Enforcers (Konami/Sega CD), the Konami coin-op, looks and sounds great in this multimedia home edition. The baby blue gun, packed with each disk, allows one player to enjoy frenzied digital combat. (A bright pink gun, purchased separately, enables a second human to participate.) Digitized criminals pop up everywhere, but the law enforcer office has to think as well as fire, or innocent bystanders could become messy casualties. The Genesis and SNES editions are good, but neither equals the nonstop thrills of this blast 'em-up.

Road Avenger (Renovation/Sega CD) has one of gaming's favorite combinations: driving and shooting. When reckless drivers kill your wife in an auto

accident, the thirst for revenge puts you behind the wheel of a turbo-charged car. The simple control system gives players four choices: move left, move right, turbo and brake. Timing is very important in **Road Avenger**, and committing too soon is as deadly as waiting too long. The graphics are large and detailed, partially derived from the Japanese anime style. **Road Avenger** offers nine tension-drenched levels of road combat.

Robo Aleste (Tengen/Sega CD) combines sizzling graphics, a dramatic music score and the hot action of the Mega CD classic **Nobunaga** and **Hin Ninja Force**. This science fantasy, which takes place in 16th century Japan, is a battle of 25-ft. tall warrior robots and flying gunboats. No one can accuse Robo Aleste of swiping some other game's premise, that's for sure. Dramatic visuals and state-of-the-art music complete the picture of a top-quality production.

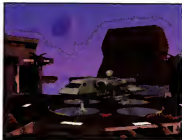
Sonic CD (Sega/Sega CD) ushers the heroic hedgehog into the world of multimedia without a single stumble. A visit to a small planet is the excuse for 60 wonderful levels of side scrolling thrills. This superb disk has all the elements that made the cartridges great, plus some new ones like time travel that enrich the Sonic experience. The score recorded with a revolutionary new technology called Q-Sound, envelopes the solitary player in music that's as wonderful as it is appropriate to the high-speed excitement synonymous with the Sonic titles.

Voyeur (Phillips/CDI) tells its mystery through a skilled cast led by veteran actor Robert Culp. It's unquestionably the best game published for the CDI multimedia system, and its excellence has gained CD-ia reappraising second look from many who dismissed it from consideration in 1992. The surveillance investigator hero stakes out a mansion for the weekend and witnesses the planning for a murder. The multi-pathed plot lets the gamer try to foil the killing, or, if that isn't possible, bring the perpetrator



Road Avenger let players take out their driving frustrations on the video screen.

to justice. **Voyeur** doesn't use the FMV cartridge, which makes the sharp digitized graphics that much more remarkable.



Privateer lets fans of the famous **Wing Commander** series go even deeper.

Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Electronic Game

Alien 3 (LJN/SNES) is a one-player cartridge tied to the third movie in the science fiction horror series. When the player, as Ripley, crash lands on a prison planet, it sets in motion the battle against the acid-spewing creatures in this horizontal and vertical scrolling shoot-out. This is one of the few blasters that stars a female character, but Ripley is as dangerous as any man with her four weapons. She needs all of them to keep the energy-draining face huggers and savage adult Aliens from overrunning the planet. This is far from a brain-dead shooter, since nuances like the tendency of over-used weapons to malfunction, make the player think fast and hard between barrages.

Dune II (Virgin/PC) is one of two games themed to Frank Herbert's science fiction novel about interstellar power politics and the rise of a galaxy-spanning religious movement. This is an endlessly fascinating strategy game in which warring noble houses vie for control of Arrakis, and the priceless spice found only on that planet. The player must orchestrate a grand strategy that include military, diplomatic and economic elements. Westwood Studios developed this excellent mind game that brings Herbert's **Dune** to interactive life.

Wing Commander Privateer (Origin Systems/PC) gives the computerist the chance to become a freebooting space adventurer in the game-universe already made familiar through **Wing Commander I and II** and their associated mission disks. While it does maintain the same feel of the originals, some exciting extras are here. When the player inherits an

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CD-i

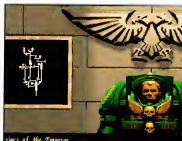


enigmatic alien artifact, it triggers a campaign of 24 varied episodes that send the hero across the stellar frontier. Those who reach the end of the lengthy, but linear, plot can play Privateer as much as they want outside the campaign structure.

Space Hulk (Electronic Arts/PC) may be the most successful electronic translation of a board game in history. Even the biggest fans of the Games Workshop original have praised EA for the way the design evokes the tension and claustrophobia of creeping through the wreckage menaced by a potential Genestealer attack from any direction. This strategy game with role-playing elements puts the player in command of one or more Elite Terminator Marines, who must confront inhuman killers who are almost impervious to harm.

StarFox (Nintendo/SNES) took first-person flying games to new heights with eye-searing visuals courtesy of Nintendo's potent SFX chip. In this space flight simulator, the player leads a squad of Space Merc through a 12-level campaign to restore freedom to the solar system. **StarFox**, unlike many shooters, boasts an interesting plot and memorable characters. Fans of animal adventure comics will especially like this spacefaring barriaryard.

T2: The Arcade Game (Arena/Gene-sis) translates the world of the two



Space Hulk captivated audiences with its grand rewards for brutal destruction.

science fiction spectaculars into pure action in a way that keeps the game faithful to the films. Playable with either the standard controller or the Menacer gun, **T2: The Arcade Game** sends the T-800 on a series of missions to protect John Connor. Each scenario, starting with a rescue in 2029, pits the Terminator against warriors as deadly as he is, if not more so. Few shooters can conjure up such intense player involvement.

Computer Multimedia Game of the Year

Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts/CD-ROM), the sequel to **Maniac Mansion**, improves on the first episode in this continuing story in virtually every respect. Tim Schafer and David Grossman bring the same design brilliance to this humorous solitaire adventure that they showed in the grimmer **Monkey Island I** and **II**. Richard Sanders provides the voice of Bernard, the time-traveling hero who travels through time to rescue his friends and end the threat posed by the mutated tentacle. The article crackles with clever touches that keep the tone from getting too gloomy while you're saving mankind.

Dracula Unleashed (Icom/CD-ROM) is a true extension of the Bram Stoker novel, not a bunch of cliché images gathered into another fascinating (yawn) side-scroller. Over 90 minutes of video



Day of the Tentacle, from LucasArts, proved to be a funny, yet tough, game.

help the player experience a five-day mission to find and destroy the Lord of the Undead in Victorian England. Professional actors turn an intelligent script into a challenging game, complete with blood-curdling sound effects and some of the best fantasy artwork you'll see anywhere.

Return of the Phantom (MicroProse/PC) employs the basic story of the deformed haunter of the opera, but adds new concepts such as a modern-day police officer who somehow journeys to the early era and solves murders in the past and present. Well-researched period illustration and a totally friendly interface make **Return of the Phantom** a rich interactive multimedia experience. The hot spot control system makes playing an intuitive process that doesn't get in the way of the absorbing tale.

Return to Zork (Activision/PC) features animated graphics, including digitized actors, that would do credit to a multimedia title. Ed Dombrower, the honored designer of **Earl Weaver Baseball**, proves that he can do more than sports simulations with this revival of an adventure gaming series that began when home computing was new. When a wily promoter turns the recently rediscovered underground empire into an amusement park, monsters are awakened in the subterranean land. The pop-up point-and-click interface has replaced the old-fashioned parser, but a lot of the Zork spirit survives to enthral today's players.

Seventh Guest (Virgin Games) is credited by many critics with turning on the world to the possibilities of interactive multimedia entertainment. Despite its limitations, including the lack of character interaction, this exploration adventure is riveting entertainment. Among its manifold attractions are fluid movement, brain-teasing puzzles, and eye-popping non-interactive set pieces. The macabre music is also excellent, and the tune changes in response to on-screen events.

Best Sports Computer Game

Indy Car Racing (Papyrus/PC) is the successor to **Indy 500**, a well-regarded racing game of several years ago. The new title is superior in every way, improving even the legendary accuracy of the earlier simulation. Texture-mapped polygons graphics enable Papyrus to move very large cars around the finely modeled tracks. Even the real billboards are incorporated into the scrolling scenery. The 15-frames-per-second animation brilliantly captures high speed racing. The design group's unstinting commitment

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pays off in a compelling motor sports simulation.

Frontline Football Pro (Dynamix/PC) is even better than the first program in this series. That's saying a lot for Pat Cook and his team, because beating that initial effort is no mean feat. One or two more coaches can guide simulated NFL players from the sidelines or direct the team on the field with the keyboard or joystick. Football Pro delves deeply into play construction, the Practice and Tutorial Modes facilitate quick assimilation of that phrase of the game. The players now execute more sophisticated on-field moves, like spins and flips, and the rest of the graphics are at least somewhat improved.

NHL Hockey (EA Sports/PC) is the finest computer hockey simulation to come along since **Gretzky 3** (Bethesda). The most popular features from EA Sports' NHL/NHLPA video game series have been imported to the PC universe by developer EA Canada. All the NHL teams, players, logos, etc. are on hand, and since it's a computer game, saving an entire season to disk is no sweat. It comes packed with a superb quality-paperback containing NHL stats and records.

Quarterpole (Microleague/PC) isn't the first try at replicating thoroughbred racing, but it is the most successful. The company's experience in simulating

other sports like baseball and football shaped this product. The result looks very good and plays with commendable realism. Quarterpole is more than a bunch of horses galloping down the straightaway. This multiplayer program makes you a part of the day-to-day existence of the sport of kings.

Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball II (SSI/PC) presents the diamond from any vantage point the gamer desires and follows the unfolding plays with full spoken play-by-play. Not only is the mathematical model more precise than in the original game, but the sequel has numerous welcome additions such as instant replay.

Most Humorous Electronic Game

Awesome Possum (Tengen/Genesis), by Richard Seabome, is a hyperactive platform game with a social conscience. The possum protagonist wants to save the environment, but the designer makes sure that there are enough amusing interludes to prevent anyone from taking this particularly save-the-world crusade too seriously. A good example of the attitude in this lovable twitch game is that **Awesome Possum** can sometimes evade danger by just hugging the ground and pretending to be dead. The multilayered animation crackles with amusing flourishes that don't diminish the difficulty of this awesomely entertaining action cartridge.

Clay Fighter (Interplay/SNES) isn't exactly roll-on-the-floor funny, but the art work and animation are sure to bring smiles to anyone who enjoys a great interactive cartoon. Fans of Will Vinton's California Raisins work will recognize the technique applied to this martial arts fighting game. The characters are huge and full of individualized personality. There's even an Elvis impersonator in this unusual, yet exceptionally playable, action cartridge.

Eric the Unready (Legend/PC) gets



A good lesson can be learned when laughing at the **Awesome Possum**.



Many will overlook Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1's strong chess engine.

lots of mileage out of its send-up of Medieval fantasy games. The hero of the piece is a failure-prone knight who wants to rescue Princess Lorealle from Queen Morgana and her menacing lover, Sir Pectoral. Tricky puzzles, excellent graphics and an enhanced version of Legend's fine interface give **Eric the Unready** all the attributes of a top quality adventure. Designer Bob Bates builds on this skeleton with funny situations, weird names, and a generally loony attitude toward the serious business of saving fair young maidens.

The Geekwad Games of the Galaxy (Tsunami/PC) designed by Paul DePledge, returns the hero of **Wacky Funsters** to the gaming screen. The only way to free King Wacky and prevent the detonation of a bomb is by answering trivia questions to get clues from notables aboard the Starship Wacky and beat the Cybergreek's score on the satiric games: Beefender, Earth Last!, Spaced Solicitors, Grogger and Phegmlings. The sequel keeps the humor of **Wacky Funsters**, but it has much better games.

National Lampoon's Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1 (Spectrum Holobyte/PC) has a solid-gold premise that doesn't cut into all-important playability. It's a solid chess program, but the animations are a lot weirder than in other chess entertainments of a similar type. **Bawdy** humor splashes brazenly across the 64-square battlefield until the last pawn bites the dust and the king succumbs to checkmate. Those who find the shenanigans too boisterous can always use what the documentation calls the Bording Set for a more standard game, but why not take a walk on the wild side, instead?

Zombies Ate My Neighbors (Konami) is a big favorite with fans of Joe Bob Briggs and Mystery Science Theatre 3000. This monster-filled action-strategy contest generates a lot of horror hijinks at the expense of the creature features that flickered across movie screens in the 1950s and 1960s.

AWESOME POSSUM™

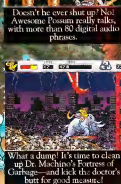
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Video Game of the Year

Aladdin (Virgin/Sega/Genesis) is the fruit of an impressive industry collaboration involving the resources of Sega, Virgin and Disney. This side-scroller masterpiece is an irrefutable argument for polling expertise. Magnificent artwork, great music and exciting game-play accompany Aladdin's trip through Agrabah's many exotic location to the climactic meeting with the evil Jaffar. Humorous animations keep the tone light in this interactive version of the universally acclaimed animated movie.

Bubsy Bobcat (Accolade/SNES, Genesis) won a lot of admirers with his Chuck Jones-inspired animation, high difficulty and breakneck pace. The side-scroller



hasn't quite eclipsed a certain hedgehog-about-town, but it has scored big sales on both of the major 16-bit platforms. The wacky story and mock-serious menace stamp it as a cartridge classic.

Mortal Kombat (Acclaim/Genesis, SNES) brought the controversy over violence in video games to a boil. One or two senators may quibble over the content, but few gamers would deny that this is one of the most exciting, competitive carts ever produced. Incredible animation, based on actual fighting stars, would have earned a nomination in the Best Graphics category if **MK** wasn't nominated in this one. The Shaolin Tournament provides the background for sophisticated martial arts mayhem for one or two players.

Rock & Roll Racing (Interplay/SNES) gets the checkered flag for its relentless racing action, reinforced with the wildest play-by-play commentary you'll ever hear by Larry "Supermouth" Huffman. Drawing on concepts found in such old-time favorites as **RC Racing** from the 8-bit era, **Rock & Roll Racing** combines conventional auto racing fun with unusual power-ups. The cartridge contains six flashing cars and more than 500 tracks on which to test their metal.

Sonic Spinball (Sega/Genesis) expands an idea introduced in **Sonic the Hedgehog II** into a marvelous game. This time, Sonic stars in a beautiful, multi-screen pinball layout that has enough table features and scoring opportunities to outfit an amusement center full of orthodox flipper machines. The theme is a chase through Dr. Robotnik's fortress, and all the familiar characters from the first two games are on hand to participate in the flipper festivities.

Street Fighter II Turbo Edition (Capcom/SNES) is this year's incarnation of the world's best-known fighting game. All the fighters now have super-powerful specialty moves, the speed is 1.5 percent faster than the previous Street

Fighter II, and the fighters look and move better. One of 1993's best sellers, Street Fighter II Turbo Edition kept this popular martial arts series at the forefront of video gaming.

Portable Game of the Year

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening (Nintendo/Game Boy) lacks only color, lamentably beyond the capabilities of the system to be the equal of Link's quests

for other game consoles. This game has everything a Zelda fan could desire, including mini-quests, tons of nifty items to find and a full supply of creature-packed dungeons. The story of Link's shipwreck is well-told, and it's hard to conceive how the graphics could get any better than this on the Game Boy.

Mortal Kombat (Acclaim/Game Gear) astounded gamers with its fidelity to the arcade original, spatter codes and all. The color saturation capabilities of the Game Gear were maxed out on this 4 Meg entry to produce large, realistic characters who look and fight like their coin-op cousins. Developed by Probe (which also did the Genesis version), **MK** on the Gear has all the fighters, all the action, all the gore. What more could you ask from a portable—blood?

Star Trek: The Next Generation (Absolute/Game Boy) enrolls the player in Starfleet Academy, where the Advanced Holodeck Tutorial provides



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many missions to teach and test the student officer. A digitized Capt. Jean-Luc Picard introduces 100 varied missions for the Enterprise, each one harder than the last. This is a real simulation of the TV series, not just a shooter. They've packed a lot of a detail, not to mention some good sound and graphics, into this 2 meg cartridge!

Super Mario Land II (Nintendo/Game Boy), Mario's second escapade on this platform, was the first 4 Meg cartridge for a portable system.

When a twisted version of lovable Mario, Wario, takes over the castle and scatters the six gold coins which Mario needs to open the gate. Mario travels through six wholly new, multi-level zones to retrieve the coins and thwart Wario's scheme. Although **Super Mario Land II** came out early in the year, it holds its own against the best fall 1993 releases, especially since it continues the story of the most popular plumbers in history.



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Computer Game of the Year

Alone in the Dark (1+Motion/PC) is a compelling horror adventure loosely based on the spine-tingling writings of H.P. Lovecraft. The story line concerns an intrepid investigator who confronts a hideous evil that inhabits a Louisiana mansion. The grim polygon graphics and subtle animation are more than equal to the task of enticing the gamer into the cursed house. This one's audiovisual effects look like multimedia, even though it plays off floppies. The publisher isn't a household name with gamers yet, but if its products continue at this level, it soon will be.

Flashback: The Quest for Identity (SSI/PC) is a multimedia-style arcade adventure on floppy disk. When a



LucasArts' X-Wing captivated fans of Star Wars with its incredible realism.

scientist discovers that aliens have infiltrated a near-future society, the invaders erase his memory and dump him on Titan. Conrad B. Hart must reach the interior of Titan, find a way to Earth, escape from a Terran jail and teleport to the alien homeworld for the ultimate reckoning. The square-pixel display technique and large rotoscoped characters make a vivid graphic statement. Flashback's plot may echo several hit movies of recent vintage, but Delphine has crafted a rich, distinctive presentation with peerless play-value.

Seal Team (SSI/PC) puts the gamer in command of an elite commando force. This action simulation offers first and third-person combat encounters in 80 missions set during the Vietnam Conflict. There's nothing like making someone take point for a four-man squad to bring home the meaning of guerrilla warfare. Assignments include reconnaissance, ambush, rescue and more, all derived from actual combat during the war.

Strike Commander (Origin/PC) was much delayed, as the development team struggled to produce a game worthy of its enormous advance hype and the public's stratospheric expectations. Many gamers disappoint after such a delay, but computerists have sung the praises of this futuristic aircraft combat simulation long and lustily. The superb three-dimensional, modeling, meticulous background story, and risky missions give **Strike Commander** explosive impact. No previous title matches its cinematic approach to aerial combat.

Walker (Psygnosis/PC) shows that all the intense action contests aren't on video game cartridge. It took Psygnosis nearly two years to get the entire game to the desired level, but the finalized version still packs cutting-edge excitement. The more strategically oriented aspects of **Walker** are quite good, of course, but no one will soon forget their first **Walker** fire fight.

X-Wing (LucasArts/PC), set in the Star Wars mythology, is fast-action space combat with fast-scrolling polygon and bitmapped images. Since **X-Wing** takes place separately from the events in the Lucas film trilogy, you can carve your own legend instead of reliving the life of Luke, Han, or Leia.

The game presents three separate tours of duty which culminate in the famous Deathstar battle sequence. Gamers of all abilities can enjoy **X-Wing**, because its extensive menu of options can make it anything from a no-frills shooter to a textured simulation of the Star Wars universe.

Best Electronic Military Simulation

Clash of Steel (SSI/PC) is a grand strategic glimpse at the European theater during World War II. **COS** is notable for many reasons. The movement and combat systems are intuitive, and the interface avoids the minutia that turns some strategy players away from straight war games. Economics are simplified to promote the emphasis on strategy, and the player will find the computer opponent plays differently from one game to the next. **COS** offers quick, entertaining play with a broad brush stroke approach to grand strategy.

Conquered Kingdoms (QPP/PC) is a feudal fantasy war game that offers infinite replayability. **CK**'s combat system is built around 16 unit types, all of which are interrelated in a paper/scissors/rock relationship. Thus, even powerful units have an Achilles Heel. Further, these attributes are also modified by terrain, which changes from one scenario to the next. As such, there is no single strategy that works every time. Players are forced to be flexible and creative to meet each new challenge.



Clash of Steel allows players to relive the great inland battles of World War II.

High Command (360/PC) also deals with WWII Europe, but it offers a more serious approach than **COS**. Rather than down playing the economic model, **HC** emphasizes it above all other factors. Logistics are the heart of the model, and the player's strategy must revolve around control of vital resource regions. Further, these resources must be transported to factories for conversion to war material, all of which is subject to Allied Air interdiction. For those who agree with Napoleon, that an army wins battles on their stomachs, **HC** rings true.

Liberty or Death (Koei/PC) is a complex military/political simulation of the American Revolution. **LOD** requires players to build the Continental Army from the ground up, curry the support of

Congress through a long campaign against a superior foe, conduct fund raising and keep the rag tag bunch of irregulars together during the lulls between battles. It is a difficult task, but Koel executed it well enough that **LOD** is being used in university level history courses.

Warlords II (SSG/PC) is a dark fantasy war game involving the unification of Illuria, a vast region which must be explored before it can be conquered. Up to eight human or computer opponents can participate in a single game, and the interface is very supportive of multiple humans on a single terminal. Further, the computer AI opponents are undoubtedly some of the strongest on the market. Diplomacy is integral to the model, and players must be multi-faceted to win the game.

Best Electronic Gaming Fanzine

Fanzines, amateur publications produced as a hobby by enthusiastic gamers, have become an important game-related activity. Electronic Games recognizes the importance of fandom with this category. (Note: Only fanzines which have published at least four issues were considered.)

Digital Press, edited by Joe Santulli (44 Hunter Pl., Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442/\$1.50) has been a leading fanzine for the last two years, and was better than ever in 1993. Joe Santulli and his staff treat old games and new with intelligence, respect, and an eye for detail that makes Digital Press entertaining as well as informative.

Paradox, edited by Chris Johnston, Jason Whitman, and Justin Schuh (316 E. 11th Ave., Naperville, IL 60563/\$1) emphasizes video games, but frequently ventures into other areas of gaming when a columnist birdogs a hot issue.

Spectrum, edited by Ara Shirinibab (10904 Haislip Ct., Potomac, MD 20854/\$1) is a fairly new voice in the fanzine ranks, but its iconoclastic editor has brought it to the forefront very quickly. This all-platforms 'zine generates plenty of controversy with its opinions, though Ara's sense of humor keeps everything in good perspective most of the time.

Video Views, edited by Ulrich Kempf (4732 Glenwood Circle, Emmaus, PA18949/\$1.25) shows there's still spark left in fans who started in the first wave of publishers. Ulrich has grown into one of fandom's best essayists, and VV's tasteful graphics have helped line up an outstanding supporting cast.

The 1994 EG Awards Official Ballot

Vote for only one nominee in each category, and don't be embarrassed to skip any category you don't feel you know well. Send your ballot to: Electronic Gaming Awards, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107

Deadline: March 19, 1994

Best Action Video Game

- __Batman Returns (Konami)
- __Cool Spot (Sega/Virgin)
- __Final Fight 2 (Capcom)
- __First Samurai (Kemco)
- __Road Rash II (EA)

Best Adventure/RPG Computer Game

- __Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix)
- __Eternam (Capstone)
- __Lands of Lore (Westwood)
- __Realms of Arkania: Blade of Destiny (Sir Tech)
- __Space Quest 5 (Sierra)
- __Ultima Underworld II (Origin)

Best Sports Video Game

- __Mutant League Football (EA)
- __NHL '94 (EA)
- __Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing (Gameltek)
- __Riddick Bowe Boxing (Extreme)
- __Royal Rumble (LJN)
- __Tony LaRussa Baseball (EA Sports)

Best Electronic Gaming Audio/Visual Effects

- __Ecco (Sega)
- __Jurassic Park (Sega)
- __The Myst (Broderbund)
- __Super Strike Eagle (MicroProse)
- __Terminator 2029 (Bethesda Software)
- __Ultrabots (Nova Logic)

Best Action Strategy/Strategy Video Game

- __Aerobiz (Koel)
- __Jungle Strike (EA)
- __The Lost Vikings (Interplay)
- __Shadowrun (SNES)
- __Super Bomberman (Hudson Soft)
- __X-Men (Sega)

Best Strategy Computer Game

- __Flix Mix (Celeris)
- __Kasparov's Gambit (EA)
- __More Incredible Machine (Sierra)
- __Stronghold (SSI)
- __Syndicate (EA/Bullfrog)

Best Action/Action-Strategy Computer Game

- __Eight-Ball Deluxe (Amtext)
- __Humans (Gameltek)
- __Lemmings II (Psygnosis)
- __Prince of Persia 2 (Broderbund)
- __Stunt Island (Disney)
- __Tornado (Spectrum Holobyte)

Console Multimedia Game of the Year

- __Exile: Wicked Phenomenon (TTI)
- __Lethal Enforcers (Konami)

- __Road Avenger (Renovation)
- __Robo Aleste (Tengen)
- __Sonic CD (Sega)
- __Voyeur (CDI)

Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Electronic Game

- __Alien 3 (LJN)
- __Dune II (Virgin)
- __Privateer (Origin)
- __Space Hulk (EA)
- __Star Fox (Nintendo)
- __T2: The Arcade Game (Arenas)

Computer Multimedia Game of the Year

- __Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts)
- __Dracula Unleashed (loom)
- __Return of the Phantom (MicroProse)
- __Return to Zork (Atvision)
- __Seventh Guest (Virgin Games)

Best Sports Computer Game

- __Indy Car Racing (Paprus)
- __NHL Hockey (EA)
- __Quarterpole (Microleague)
- __Tony LaRussa II (SSI)

Most Humorous Electronic Game

- __Awesome Possum (Tengen)
- __Clay Fighter (Interplay)
- __Eric the Unready (Legend)
- __Geekwad (Tsunami)
- __Nat'l Lampoon's Chess Maniac (Spectrum Holobyte)
- __Zombies Ate My Neighbors (Konami)

Video Game of the Year

- __Aladdin (Virgin/Sega/Genesis)
- __Bubsy Bobcat (Accolade)
- __Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)
- __Rock & Roll Racing (Interplay)
- __Sonic Spinball (Sega)
- __Street Fighter II-Turbo Edition (Capcom)

Portable Game of the Year

- __The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening (Nintendo)
- __Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)
- __Star Trek: The Next Generation (Absolute)
- __Super Mario Land II (Nintendo)

Computer Game of the Year

- __Alone in the Dark (I•Motion)
- __Flashback (SSI)
- __Seal Team (SSI)
- __Strike Commander (Origin)
- __Walker (Psygnosis)
- __X-Wing (LucasArts)

Best Electronic Military Simulation

- __Clash of Steel (SSI)
- __Conquered Kingdoms (QQP)
- __Liberty Command (Three Sixty)
- __High or Death (Koel)
- __Warlords II (SSG)

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- __Digital Press
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PLAYERS' GUIDE TO FANTASY GAMING



ACTION IS MY FANTASY!

EG'S CRYSTAL BALL LOOKS AT THE HOTTEST UPCOMING FANTASY GAMES

Several factors have contributed to a significant drop in the number of action-fantasy games available in recent months. Fantasy role-playing is a much smaller category in the contemporary video game universe, for one thing, and computer-based fantasy software rarely integrates action elements. The exceptions which prove the rule, such as last year's **Alone in the Dark** (FMotion/PC), have frequently been outstanding, but arcade-style action remains a rarely-seen component in most computer RPGs.

Another factor in the limited number of action-based fantasy titles is the overall decline of platform and side-shooter games. Whereas the entire fantasy bestiary was invoked as targets and opposition during the late '80s, the remaining side-scrolling video games have mostly sought out non-fantasy subject matter.

Thankfully, of course, there are some great exceptions.

The Unlikeliest Hero

Among the more interesting video game action-fantasy entries is DTMC's satirical **Lester the Unlikely**. This 8-Meg SNES entry offers almost two dozen levels of fantasy-based action with its tongue planted firmly in cheek the entire way. Player-character Lester is an up-front nerd whose cowardice is so overpowering that, in moments of fight-or-flight stress, Lester will occasionally break free of the gamer's control and actually bolt from danger!

Lester the Unlikely uses a traditional side-scrolling visual format that in some ways resembles a larger-scale version of **Flashback** (U.S. Gold/SNES and Genesis) or **Jurassic Park** (Sega/Genesis). Unlike those games, however, the scenery is not laid out in platform format, with the player-character moving among several strata or levels within a single playscreen. While there are trees and other objects which Lester can climb, the level on which Lester is traveling always fills the entire screen.

The game does offer the same richly articulated character animation, however. While Lester is perhaps four times larger than the player-character in **Flashback**,

his movements are almost as fluid.

Lester can walk, run, kick (he doesn't punch), use weapons (once he finds them), jump (long or short), pick up and drop objects. The left and right controller buttons, meanwhile, allow the player to peek offscreen either up or down, as in **Bubsy Bobcat** (Accolade/SNES).

Lester the Unlikely also resembles **Flashback** in the way it forces the player to explore and interact with the multiple objects found on every screen. The game



Lester the Unlikely is the common high school computer geek . Or is he?

also demonstrates a genuine sense of humor—it claims to have been filmed in "Stunning 2-D" and the wonder of "Geek-O-Vision." Its only serious failing: there are continues, but no game saves!

Mercs on a Mission

While the pickings in terms of fantasy-oriented platform games may be slim, both SNES and Genesis owners can still blast away at a great collection of night-mare monsters in the topdown twitch game, **Soldiers of Fortune** (Spectrum/HoloByte). Created by the Bitmap Brothers, **Soldiers** is a heavy-duty, 16-Meg action role-player in which gamers create a custom fighting force from among six different mercenaries, each armed to the hilt with their own special implements of destruction.

Even in One-player Mode, the mission is too dangerous for one character, so a second merc is assigned to ride shotgun on the player-character. The assignment

isn't an easy one: the in-house Chaos engine, a machine that churns out an incredible variety of lethal traps and ugly monsters.

Soldiers of Fortune incorporates an interesting selection of power-ups and a terrific variety of location settings. The game runs, and looks, virtually the same on both the Genesis and SNES.

Aladdin Trouble and a Baleful Beast

As usual, one of the most dependable sources for quality fantasy has been the Disney Studios. Sunsoft, for example, has produced both an adventure and an action game based on Disney's **Beauty and the Beast**. **Roar of the Beast** (Sunsoft/Genesis) casts the gamer as the tormented Beast in a side-scrolling, multi-stage contest to regain the creature's lost humanity. The action begins in the Beast's castle, which has been overrun with nasty rats, spiders, and other small-scale creepy-crawlies, then advances out into the snowswept forest where the player-character must move through the trees in order to elude the packs of hungry wolves who snap at his paws. The game reaches its conclusion when the Beast finds that the ever-present Angry Villagers have pillaged his castle, forcing him to regain his most valuable possessions before a climactic showdown with Gaston atop the castle itself.

And, of course, the action-fantasy game of the year was also inspired—and partially created by—Disney. **Aladdin** for the Genesis is a side-scrolling masterpiece, developed and co-published (with Sega) by Virgin Games. Disney animators were brought in to produce animation cells which were then integrated into the game through a special image processing technology. Produced by veteran gamer Rob Aky, **Aladdin** does a spectacular job of recreating the smash film in a side-scrolling environment.

SNES owners can also enjoy the adventures of Aladdin, Princess Jasmine, the Genie, Abu and company, courtesy of Capcom's **Aladdin**. If this version suffers somewhat in comparison to the Genesis edition, however, it is simply the fate of a very good product standing in the shadow of a masterpiece.

So, while we see that recent history has not exactly overlapped with action-fantasy gaming, quality has obviously replaced quantity. This year's crop may not be large, but it is undeniably impressive.

—Bill Kunkel

LANDSTALKING ON THE GENESIS

A LOOK INTO SEGA'S HIDDEN GEM;
ACTION/ROLE-PLAYING AT ITS FINEST.

Why Haven't I Heard of This Game?

Sega is a company famous for **Sonic the Hedgehog**, **Toejam & Earl**, and a plethora of driving and sports games. They are also known for their excellent series of RPGs bearing the **Phantasy Star** name. Beyond that, though, there have been several attempts to create other good role-playing games, these efforts have not generated the response that Sega would have wished.

Sword of Vermillion drew a good initial crowd but was generally regarded with disappointment. **Shining in the Darkness** was a game that boasted good graphics but didn't have the type of diversity that the **Phantasy Star** games did. Although it looked pretty good, it was still met coolly. The follow-up, **Shining Force**, was an excellent game but did not really target the proper audience. Instead of relying on the standard RPG format, a good deal of strategy was thrown in. The game was set up to draw attention away from the exploring aspect of the game and instead focused it on the battle sequences.

Because of the limited success of these games, Sega has not really properly promoted their latest offering, **Landstalker**.

Coming from the same designers as both **Shining in the Darkness** and **Shining Force**, though the game is completely different than either of these two offerings.



There is a huge land for Nigel to explore in his search for the ultimate treasure.

Landstalker is an action-oriented RPG in a similar vein as Nintendo's **Zelda** series. While the familiar role-playing elements of hit-points and progressively powerful equipment is present, battle is focused on the action elements rather than the strategy ones. There is only one character to control here, rather than the standard four or more in an RPG, and consequently only one character to worry about.



Be sure to talk to everyone. It is the only way to get clues to the treasure.

The character is named Nigel, and he is a treasure hunter. The mission is one of pure profit; to find the legendary treasures of the famous King Nole. No treasure hunter has ever been able to find these treasures, even though they have been looking for several hundred years.

Still, Nigel has some good leads and is confident (or is that cocky) in his ability to locate this treasure of treasures.

The story is a little above standard fare for this type of game. It is refreshing to find a game where the main goal is something other than rescuing a princess who has been abducted by an ultimate evil being. Though the game does not hold as much depth as your average computer RPG, it is still meaty.



What a good treasure hunter wants is money, and there is plenty to find here.

The graphics lurking inside of this underexposed cartridge are superb, perhaps the best Sega has ever offered for any type of adventure game. It is widely believed that the graphics of an RPG really don't matter, as long as the game plays well. Why this might be true, the quality of the graphics here sure don't hurt anything either. The characters are large and well animated, and the special 3/4 overhead perspective gives the game a wonderful 3-D look.

Game control is a little hard to get used to because of the perspective. Players must use the angles on the control pad to move the character about the screen, and with the standard pad such movement tends to be quite awkward. It is recommended that a joystick be used for this game since diagonals are easier to achieve with one.

Small control problems aside, **Landstalker** is a game that Sega should have given a much better push. The Genesis system has been crying out for such a game since its introduction and it is a bit of a shame that many people will never find out that there is one available because of the general lack of support Sega has given to this title.

In short—give this game a try. If you like a good action/RPG this is for you!

— Marc Camron



THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

EG'S CRYSTAL BALL LOOKS AT THE HOTTEST UPCOMING FANTASY GAMES

Be forewarned that the crystal ball is dark and murky with repeated use. The images it conjures may not be perfectly defined. Some of the products revealed herein will appear shortly after this reading. As such, their form is solid and the casting true. Others are more distant, and should not appear until the summer equinox. For these, many things about their nature are subject to change. Thus armed with a measure of skepticism, read on, brave adventurer.



Ultima VIII continues the vein of great game play from previous Origin games.

Origin Systems is nearing completion of **Ultima VIII**, which has been redesigned around a completely new engine. Both turn-based combat and auto combat (first used in **Ultima VII**) are out the door. The new system will feature a visually realistic, real time style that will allow the user to control the Avatar's actions directly. Not only can the character walk and attack, he can also choose secondary attack forms, leap forward and upward, run and even climb. The new method of representation certainly enhances affinity with the onscreen avatar, but it has also mandated that the Avatar lose his normal entourage of traveling companions.

The new movement system has also been used to advantage elsewhere. Every non-player-character (NPC) has been drawn with unique animation frames, so that each character walks, eats and fights with his or her own personal mannerisms, all of which are

instantly recognizable as distinctive from other NPCs. Since there is much more detail included in the game, the camera angle has been lowered as well, to afford players the opportunity to appreciate the effort that has been taken to make the **Ultima World** more realistic than ever:

Object manipulation and time management have been changed as well. The inventory model is still close to the paper doll system used by **Ultima VII**, albeit with some minor improvements, but all objects are now treated in accordance with the laws of physics. If the Avatar throws a book, it arcs with the proper trajectory then bounces or slides when it hits the ground. Further, while interacting with the objects or inhabitants of the world, life goes on elsewhere in normal time. This serves to give the player a sense of structure consistent with the rest of the **Ultima** universe and aids in the suspension of disbelief.

Ultima VIII begins where **Serpent Isle** left off. As the Guardian reaches through the void, grasping the Avatar in his immense hand, he is faced with a difficult decision. What, exactly, is he to do with this annoying little thorn of a person? His answer is to drop the Avatar into Pagan, a world already conquered ages ago, until he can figure a way to use the Avatar to his benefit.

When the Guardian dominated Pagan in ancient times, he left four malevolent Titans behind to rule the world and protect his interests. Each of the Titans represents one of the four elements: Earth, Water, Air and Fire. Individually, and sometimes cooperatively, these giants hold

sway over all of Pagan. Threatened by the new environment, the Avatar must unlock the mystery behind the Titans' power and find a way to escape his prison. Failing to do so will result in the ruination of Britannia, and Earth as well, at the hands of the Guardian.

Somewhat further down the road, fans of **Betrayal at Krondor** can expect to be dazzled by **Riftwar Legacy II: Thief of Dreams (TOD)**. Dynamix was very pleased with the response generated by the original **Krondor** and is working diligently to make **TOD** a breakout product in the genre. John Cutter's design team compiled over 1000 messages posted on CompuServe regarding the original and condensed them down into a 32



The angled top-down perspective from previous Ultima titles is rejuvenated.

page list of suggested improvements. This list has been further refined to 16 pages, only some of which may be discussed at the current stage of game development.

TOD will retain **Krondor's** basic movement system, but the ability to side step will be included and the graphics will be enhanced. Zones of Control (ZOCs) will





be added to the combat model; which will permit some form of "guard" function, and Dynamix is also hoping to include a more complex armory, a method of dual weapon use, more spells to cast and expanded combat animations. Towns and cities will be much more complex than in **Kronador**. Previously, players either had a digitized backdrop of a city with several active point and click areas, or a "shanty" town with only a few actual houses to visit and explore. **TOD**'s locations will be much more complex and offer many more objects to manipulate.

Followers of the Riftwar Saga novels will also be happy to know that Raymond Feist, the author, is working very closely with Dynamix on the game's design. Expect **TOD** to appear simultaneously on floppy and CD formats, with the latter featuring more digitized audio during the animated cut sequences. Dynamix is hoping for a Christmas '94 release.

Sierra is keeping its name in the forefront of adventure gaming with the latest installment in the **Quest for Glory** series. **QFG IV: Shadows of Darkness (SOD)** introduces players to Mordavia, a rather



Quest for Glory IV: Shadows of Darkness is the latest title in the Sierra line.

discreet title sales. Located in a rugged, geographical landscape, the Malignant Mountains and the Heinous Hills. smack in the middle of this mysterious locale is Borgov Castle, whose inhabitants have disappeared under some rather questionable circumstances. What could be at the bottom of this madness? That is for the player to

discern, using a character created by the game or imported from any of the earlier titles in the series.

One of the nicest features of **SOD** is the ability of the program to adapt to different player skill levels and styles. It is possible, for example, to specify whether combat will be handled arcade style or on a purely strategic level. Also, **SOD** will feature three times as many puzzles as the previous releases in the series, with a good mixture of complexity. The magic system has been enhanced by the addition of six new spells: *Aura* (an undead protection spell), *Glide* (which allows the character to "walk on water"), *Flotsbite*, *Hide*, *Protection* and *Resistance*. The basic mechanics of the Sierra interface will remain essentially unchanged, but players can expect a slicker graphic look for the new **Quest for Glory**, comparable to that of the later **King's Quest** titles.

If graphics are the thing, Interplay's **Stonekeep** will certainly be a contender for visually oriented players. Every character or monster in the game is either a digitized live actor in costume and makeup or a fully rendered 3-D studio animation. As a result, combat and encounter sequences are fluid and lifelike, and each character is distinctive and unique. Further, by paring the interface down to a mouse and two "hot keys", Interplay is able to present the tremendously detailed world they have created in full screen mode, as opposed to the traditional inset window.

Stonekeep begins when the goddess Thea imprisons the player's soul for safekeeping in the perilous quest ahead. The objective she demands for the recovery of that soul is to retrieve the Orbs of Life and Power the Shadow King and his evil minions. The task is not easy, but

the player will likely be that, somewhat by the pressure of a substantial part of companions, each of whom act independently and intuitively based on status of the act AI routines. At press time, **Stonekeep** remained far from completion, but Interplay has already invested over 20 man years in the design. As such, when the product does cross the portal into our dimension, it is likely that its arrival will be a momentous occasion.

Strategic Simulations Inc. (SSI), venerable mainstay of fantasy game publishing, is expanding its already comprehensive line of AD&D titles in new directions with **Al-Qadim: Genie's Curse (Genie)** and **Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession**. **Genie** is an entry level RPG set in the world of the Arabian Nights. The player assumes the role of an outcast from society whose once mighty clan has been dishonored by treachery and sor-



Al-Qadim: Genie's Curse combines entry level RPG gaming with intense action.

cery. The only chance to redeem the family name is to challenge the Genie Lords.

Genie will use a pre-generated character because the story line is written closely around this persona. A simple point and click interface will provide real time movement and arcade style combat. Variable skill levels, such as the ones described for **SOD**, will allow players of different strengths to enjoy the game equally. Keep in mind, however, that the entire adventure is most heavily targeted toward new players of this type of game. Indeed, from start to finish, the whole adventure is not intended to require more than 40 hours of combat, exploration, puzzles and role playing.

The greatest appeal of **Genie** for experienced players, therefore, is the opportunity to escape the "dark ages" setting that is prevalent in this genre. For those who remember the Sinbad films, or grew up on yarns about Aladdin or Baba and the Forty Thieves, this could prove a temptation too great to resist and too fun to think about ignoring. Further,

PLAYERS' GUIDE TO FANTASY GAMING

the entire game will be lavishly illustrated and set off with a dynamic original sound score that evokes the mystical mood of an Arabian night. Only a handful of products address the entry level adventurer adequately (**Quest for Glory** being one of them), so **Genie** should fill the gap quite nicely.



Choosing the right character is a vital part of fulfilling your dangerous quest.

Ravenloft offers much meatier fare for the experienced adventurer, and has the added bonus of an unusual setting. Although the player is still within the Forgotten Realms, **Ravenloft** has much more of a gothic horror feel than other titles in this setting. The story opens with the ruler of Eturel and his Mage being wounded by an unknown assailant, who steals Lord Dheft's amulet at the same time. The cleric Berelduin Shonder and the party, long time members of the High Moor Heroes Guild and friends of the Lord, rush to aid the stricken ruler. Their oath of allegiance and vengeance for the heinous crime which has been committed forms the backdrop for the remainder of the story.

The party's oath is intrinsic to their being taken to **Ravenloft**, and the dark powers will not let them escape until their oath is fulfilled. The Vistani have foreseen the arrival of mighty magic items into Barovia, items with great power over the undead. The villain Strahd covets these items and the party must take them from him to "make him pay for what he has done." And Strahd has done quite a lot.

Ravenloft uses the 2nd edition of the AD&D rule set and fully incorporates celestial cycles because of their importance when dealing with Vampires and the undead. All action takes place from a first person perspective with smoothly scrolling 3D environments, both interior

and exterior. The former is a vast, vasty subterranean, the latter in the **Eye of the Beholder** series and the latter are eight years ahead of the innovative portrayals of Data East's **Drakkhen**. The autopmap features are reminiscent of those used by **Ultima Underworld**, and the player can annotate the maps however they wish prior to printing them.

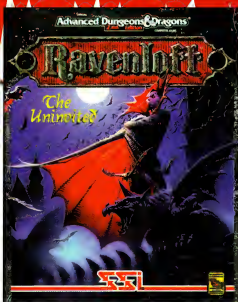
The **Ultima** series has obviously influenced **Ravenloft**'s design in other ways as well. The inventory system is very similar to the paper doll method used by **Ultima**, although there are more expanded windows for the extraneous items one can carry under the AD&D rule set. Also, the character generation routine is very similar to the tarot card reading gypsy at the beginning of **Ultima IV**. Players can personalize their characters with over 30 unique portraits and the use of light shading throughout the product is truly remarkable.

Mindcraft also enters the fantasy arena with two new titles: **Realms of Fate: The Gryphon Masters of Havlar (ROF)** and **Dominion: the Life of a King**.



Realms of Fate: The Gryphon Masters features advanced control of NPCs.

The latter is complete enough to be examined in an exclusive sneak preview that accompanies this article. As the successor to the fabled **Magic Candle** series, **ROF** expands on the "speak squares" concept used by the original. **ROF** introduces order triggers: squares and objects that order NPCs not just to speak, but also to move and interact with their environments. This is used to create characters that not only speak on their own whims, but wander off, steal items, attack their own party members, desert a fight in progress and even take



the initiative in dungeon exploration.

The central character of **ROF** is Bryn, a recently resurrected hero whose final slumber is disturbed by the curse of the undead. Against a backdrop of Celtic mythology, Bryn must solve a myriad of complex puzzles and defeat the angry Gods to regain peace for his soul. Because of that background, traditional Orc and Dragon opponents are eschewed for warrior goddesses and hybrid monsters born of Celtic Lore.

ROF will also introduce aerial mounted combat in the manner of **SSI's DragonStrike**. The visual perspective for all of this action will be a **Zaxxon**-like, three-quarters view oriented from the southwest, with all walls running either east/west or north/south. Light scoring will be fixed directly above the playing field such that tables, chairs and arches will have shadows directly beneath them, but none of the shadow problems of **Siege** or **Magic Candle** will remain. All action will take place in real time, but a pause button will be included for those players who are daunted by such systems.

By now, it should be apparent that many new realms await diehard adventurers in the months ahead. Further, many of these lands will test even the most experienced in new and exciting ways. Because these trials will surely be perilous, it is best to rest and prepare for the coming glory.

For now, be comforted that EG will be at your elbow as each peril reveals itself, and we'll pass our knowledge on to you.

DOMINION: THE LIFE OF A KING

EG TAKES A TRIP BACK TO THE DAYS OF THE ANCIENTS TO WITNESS A KINGDOM'S BIRTH.

Dominion (Minecraft) is a fantastic strategy game set in a naturalist's age. Players assume the role of a young King or Queen struggling for survival on a continent populated by independent city-states and provinces.

The time period assumed is between 1200-1600 A.D., the era of European exploration and discovery, but the game includes strong elements of fantasy. Each continent is populated by noble savages, beastmen, intelligent animals, insects and reptiles plus an assortment of mythical/fabled beings come to life.

In the beginning, little will be known about the continent as a whole. Players will be limited to complete knowledge of their own kingdom and partial information about neighboring provinces. The first objective will be to investigate the bordering lands and consolidate power within the region controlled. As time progresses, outside matters consume more of the player's attention and a system of Ministers is established to help shoulder the burden of management. These individuals may prove to be loyal and competent, and therefore very valuable to the cause, or they may be either disloyal or incompetent, though one may not discover this until the worst possible time.

Time is important in **Dominion**, and the program handles it in a unique way. Distinct "turns" have been avoided entirely, as has a dependence on accelerated real time. Instead, the designers have opted to use a variable time scale that is driven in large part by player action or inaction. To explain, if absolutely nothing of import is happening with regard to the player's kingdom, time will pass quickly and without interruption. If, on the other hand, events

are fast and furious, such as during a war, the system will pause and allow for new order input every day of the King's life. Optionally, the player can specify a time interval between pauses should no event trigger a command input in the interim.

Within the kingdom, the people are the greatest resource. They are the only method of producing the food, ore and goods required for economic stability and, without them, it is impossible to build the armies to explore, conquer and defend the empire. Further, a person lost to war or raids cannot be replaced by "buying" a new one for "x" number of gold from the treasury. The people of **Dominion** are born, come of age and die in accordance with the natural cycle. If all the men of combat age are squandered in a fruitless or poorly managed war, players will experience the same post war difficulties that Germany faced; they will have to attempt to rebuild an economy on the backs of old men, women and children.

The economic system is simple, but efficient for modeling the feudal system of government, where tenants and vassals paid tribute to the ruler of a province in return for protection. The quality of land in a province determines

how much agricultural food and ore can be produced. Actual production depends on how many people live in that region, how many are capable of working in a given field (farmers, miners, craftsmen), and how many government controlled people are present to oversee production quotas and tribute collection. Too much heavy control, as well as not enough in some instances, will cause internal dissension and possible defection of a region.

Militarily, each kingdom has multiple regions, defined by a local town. One special area is defined as the seat of government, and is represented by the throne. Destruction of this castle is necessary for an enemy army to take over the kingdom, but the throne may be moved to avoid capture at any time prior to that occurrence. Also, all of the regions of a kingdom are connected via roads which are essential to trade and



Diplomacy, economics and strategy are woven together to create Dominion.

survival. If one or more provinces of a kingdom are cut off from the travel route which connects to the remainder, they may be reclaimed by any conquering army.

The real beauty of **Dominion** is the manner in which the interrelationships of diplomacy, economics and strategy are presented. Computer rulers make decisions based off individual AI routines and establish their own unique network of alliances, enemies and trade routes. The player is afforded similar freedom of action. It is possible to have a very enjoyable game acting as a minor player and exerting only peripheral influence on the course of the world over a lifetime.

It can be tough, however, to resist the opportunity to push the limits of empire and dominance, particularly in a system/play environment as elegant and complete as that of **Dominion**. Players who love the challenge of building an empire with deep and intricate strategies are sure to be impressed with this game.

Ed Dille



SENATOR WANTS CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON GAMES!

The censorship story on video games (EG/December '93) is far from over. Senator Joe Lieberman (Democrat/Connecticut) says that he plans to introduce legislation to force the electronic entertainment industry to adopt a ratings or warning label system on video games. The bill, co-sponsored by Senator Herb Kohl (Democrat/Wisconsin), gives the industry a year to develop such a system. Otherwise, the government would appoint an independent council to rate the games.

The Senator's statement was made in a news conference with Bob "Captain Kangaroo" Keeshan and representatives from parent and teacher groups. Following that press conference, leading spokesmen of the gaming industry appeared before the Judiciary and Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice and Government Affairs Subcommittee on Regulation and Government Information.

Nintendo Calls For Content Guidelines

Howard Lincoln, senior VP of Nintendo of America, says that company follows a content guideline which bans excessive violence or sexually suggestive material, and urged other entertainment developers to do the same. "Violence will not disappear with a rating system... It is incumbent upon each individual software developer to adopt stringent content guidelines..." said Lincoln. He elaborated the company's position, saying, "A game

such as **Night Trap** will never be produced for a Nintendo system." He also agreed with the Senator's criticisms of advertising and said that Nintendo licensees with offensive ads would either have to change their ads, or give up their license.

Lincoln added, "We have extended an invitation to Sega of America as well as numerous other industry members to join Nintendo in devising a workable solution to this issue... We look forward to convening an industry-wide conference to begin hammering out the details as soon as possible."

SoA Responds To Senator

Bill White, Sega of America VP of marketing, responded to the Senator's statement by applauding his intent. "No one wants young children exposed to violence or themes more appropriate to a mature audience. That's why we instituted the rating system for our games.

"People need to know that this industry is changing to accommodate its customer base. The Atari generation has grown up and they haven't stopped playing. As they have matured, their tastes have changed, and as technology has changed, so have our video games."

Tom Kalinske Speaks Out

The president and CEO of Sega of America, Thomas Kalinske, responded to Senator Lieberman's statement in a letter which agreed with his concern about violence in interactive media, but pointed to congressional reports that cite societal causes of violence, such as poverty, injustice, abuse, educational deprivation, unemployment, de-institutionalization of the severely mentally ill, widespread access to firearms and drug addiction. "You should be aware that there is no consensual, or even near consensual notion among media researchers that violence in media begets violence in behavior... You should note, for example, that in Japan, where interactive media is far more violent and far more

A Statement by Senator Joe Lieberman

The Roman poet Virgil once said, "As the twig is bent the tree inclines." He was talking about children, and his philosophy underlies my concern about the violence and sex found nowadays in video games played by younger persons.

I visited my alma mater, Stamford High School, recently to talk to young people there about my effort to get video game manufacturers to remove offensive scenes from their games, or at least to develop a good rating or warning label system so parents could avoid games they don't want their kids to play. When I attended the school, about the only "video games" were *What's My Line?* and *To Tell The Truth*. It's a long journey from there to *Mortal Kombat* and *Lethal Enforcer*, and hardly an uphill climb.

While some students saw no problem with violent video games, one teenager who baby sits for a three and a five-year old said they play *Mortal Kombat* for hours on end, and proceed to beat each other up when they finish. That is anecdotal, not scientific evidence, but studies exist linking exposure to violence on television to aggressive behavior in young people. Those studies have focused on the act of simply observing violence in movies or television programs. I am concerned that video games have an even greater effect on our kids, because the child is doing much more than watching; he or she is controlling the action, and gets positive feedback for making his

pervasive in homes and arcades, that overall societal violence in that country is far less than in our own."

He acquainted the Senator with statistics that indicate that a very sizable percentage of the video game audience is adult (40% of the Genesis audience, and 60% of the Sega CD audience are adult), and went on to explain the efforts Sega is making to help parents make intelligent choices about games that they purchase. He offered full assistance, and urged the Senator to allow the industry "to regulate ourselves in a way that serves the interests of the society."

"We do agree with your intent of seeing that we all live in a just, safe and humane society. We just disagree with you on what undermines that in our country." Kalinske went on to say, "Treating the cause of an illness is always the best cure. Surely you can't claim video games are a cause of gangs, poverty,



Games with graphic violence, such as *Lethal Enforcers*, are causing a stir.

character behave more violently than his opponents. You "win" when you get to pull the beating heart, head and spinal column out of the bleeding body.

If we're allowing the twigs to bend in that direction, what will be the inclination of the tree?

Violence is always going to be present in our society. But as Bob Keeshan, television's Captain Kangaroo, said so well, "there is a place for gentleness in the life of a child, and children do not need violence to be entertained." His program proved that point well for generations, and I am worried now that violent video games are filling the void that programs like Bob Keeshan's have left behind.

It is important to seem that society itself has too few limits. Crime is increasingly vicious and random. Human life seems to be worth less to too many people. Where is our moral compass? What values are guiding our society, and are we imparting to our children, who represent the future of this country and our world? Violent video games are not the beginning nor the end of our modern problems, but they are a visible symptom of them, and it seems as good a point as any for parents, educators and public officials to draw the line, to stand up and say "no" to the video game industry which sees few limits on its own behavior.

Those who create violent video games know children are playing them. Yet they have exhibited precious little restraint, perhaps recognizing how appealing their games are, and how many they can sell by appealing to base instincts. But I



Senator Lieberman, (D-Conn.) has some interesting views about game violence.

argue that those who are pushing the frontiers of technology have an obligation to use that technology in ways that advance the human condition, not detract from it. Video games, CD-Roms and other advances hold great potential for educating and entertaining us. Many examples of positive games and educational tools are on the market. But far too many violent video games are being made and sold, and new generations of virtual reality promise to bring us sexually explicit games that will also, I fear, fall into the hands of too many children, with terrible consequences.

The video game industry has been put on notice. It has an opportunity to restrain itself, stop producing the junk, or at least give parents the information they need to make informed decisions about what's good for their children. But

if the video game industry fails to come through, I believe Congress can and will act on legislation I have introduced with Senator Herb Kohl.

Our bill will create an independent council of experts who would give the video game industry one year to come up with a good ratings or warning label system and require all video games to use it. An important part of a voluntary or required label system is that it be industry-wide, and that it be enforced. In other words, it is not enough for the maker of a video game to stick a label on the package. The label, in easy to understand terms, must be clearly visible in all advertising of the product, and at the point of sale or rental, so consumers will be under no illusions about what they are buying.

That is not very much to ask. In fact, it is the least the video game industry can do, not the best it can do. Far better if video game makers simply show good judgment and make no games with extreme violence or sexual themes. Most comic book companies learned that lesson decades ago, and have adhered to a strict Comics Code Authority that prohibits, for example, the depiction of blood, gunshot wounds, or foul language in comics.

But the bottom line is what is best for our children. As the twig is bent the tree inclines. To the video game industry, I say, don't bend our children's minds toward violence. There are already too many negative influences in today's society that threaten the future of our kids. Video games shouldn't be one of them.

availability of guns, broken homes, etc."

Are These Ads Too Violent?

Senator Lieberman, saying that a rating system would only be the start of his censorship proposals, pointed to two ads in particular, citing them as offensive. The ad for **The Untouchables** (Ocean/SNES) features a picture of three bullets with the caption "They've got a bullet with your name on it." In the ad for **Splatterhouse 3** (Namco/Genesis), he objected to the wording "deadly new weapons," "monster bashing mayhem" and "killer special moves."

VSDA Leader Expresses Concern

Dawn Wiener, president of the Video Software Dealers Assn., testified in front

of the Judiciary Subcommittee and expressed concerns: "As president of the VSDA and, perhaps more importantly, as a mother of three children, I am very concerned about depictions of gratuitous violence in all forms of entertainment. But I am also concerned about governmental actions that may endanger two of our most cherished freedoms—freedom of expression and the freedom to make our own individual choices concerning our private lives." She went on to express the belief that the proposed National Independent Council for Entertainment in Video Devices would set a dangerous precedent that could jeopardize First Amendment rights.

Ms. Wiener said she believes such a council is unnecessary. "A few months ago, we began working with video game manufacturers...to create a comprehensive, industry-wide, voluntary rating system for interactive video." She pointed to

the effectiveness of the motion picture rating system introduced in 1968.

Industry Forms Coalition

Sega announced a "broad industry coalition" to establish the guidelines for games. "We've brought aboard software publishers representing 90% of games currently available, as well as retailers representing 60% of all stores selling games in the U.S.," said White.

The group also includes the Software Publishers Association (SPA) and Video Software Dealers Association (VSDA), and leading retailers such as Wal-Mart, Toys 'R' Us, Sears and The Wherehouse.

Terry Valieski of Atari said, "Our industry is changing at a dramatic pace. It is no longer simply a matter of child's play. Older players expect something a bit different than youngsters."

Slapshot!

A Look at the Latest in Electronic Hockey!

by Bill Kunkel

It's the world's fastest team competition, a contact sport in which a normal-sized human can be a superstar, and it's only just begun to break out of its geographical shell.

Ice hockey is an enigma. Until recently, it had no real popularity outside the snow belt, its few forays on network TV were largely unsuccessful and it has the worst reputation among non-fans this side of pro wrestling.

But hockey is changing. Franchises have been granted to locations as far afield

from the hockey hardcore as Florida (the Panthers) and Anaheim (the "groan" Mighty Ducks) and ESPN

has begun to carry games on a regular basis.

Most importantly, however, even in the wake of expansion, the emphasis on bullyboy tactics has been discouraged. Having seen the big bucks that a Gretzky can earn by flashing a winsome smile, players are less anxious to have their teeth knocked out. Moreover, the NHL has been well integrated by European hockey players, who emphasize skating, passing, and shooting over stick checks. Skill and strategy are being emphasized and a new generation of less bloodthirsty fans have joined the fun.

This change is clearly being reflected in interactive electronic entertainment, where sports games are the single largest video game category and hockey simulations are suddenly adding up like

goals at an All-Star game. And the good news is that this new breed of hockey game has placed the emphasis on skill, rather than on the often over-played thuggery.

EA Skates Away

The undisputed king of hockey sims is EA Sports, with its long-running NHL series, originally developed by Park Place but since taken in-house. The latest rev in this phenomenal line is NHL '94, with

versions either already released or soon to be in SNES, Genesis and Sega CD formats.

New features this time out include 4-way play (with the

EA adapter), goalie control, a new flip pass for clearing the puck up the ice, new checking animations, penalty shots, reverse angle on replays and a Shootout Mode. There's also a Crowd Meter that allows the gamer to set the decibel level, new organ music (digitally recorded by Sharks' keyboard wiz Dieter Ruehle), team logos, additional stats, player and user records, player profiles, and, of course, all the NHL expansion teams.

Finally, there are three new features, two of them play-related, that deserve special attention. One is the controversial inclusion of hot and cold streaks, an attempt to simulate the performance range of real players. Ron Barr informs

gamers which players are going well and who's in a funk before each game. The second play-based innovation is the "one timer," a fantastic new pass-and-shoot maneuver that eliminates the shooter's need to trap the puck being passed to him before getting off a shot.

But perhaps the neatest extra of all are the NHL '94 Game Cards, a special supplemental treat available from EA Sports for hardcore fans. The boxed set of cards provides information on new features, designer tips, special skill cards focusing on the highest rated player in each skill category, as well as the standard team and player cards. The entire set includes 225 cards in all, and is an absolute must-have for NHL diehards.

The Genesis version of NHL '94 will look and sound pretty familiar to long-time fans of the series, as will the Sega CD edition, which throws in some FMV hockey sequences as filler. But the SNES version will blow the doors off Nintendo sports fans. Unlike previous SNES editions of EA Sports titles, which frequently suffered by comparison to their Genesis brothers, this is the masterpiece, the finest hockey video game ever published. The colors and animations are remarkably clean, and the digitized audio enhances the realism to an astonishing degree.

A Hull of a Hockey Game

No matter how daunting EA's hockey series may be, the video game sports market is far too lucrative for rival publishers to roll over and play dead. Accolade recently challenged EA's dominance by signing announcer Al Michaels and second-generation superstar Brett Hull to star in **Brett Hull Hockey** for the SNES and Genesis. However, gone are the days when a sports video game can do hot business with only one star; Accolade wisely also signed with the NHLPA (though not the NHL). As a result, the game features real NHL players' names, likenesses and stats, as well as real NHL cities, but not the team names or logos.

The game itself uses plenty of computing power to simulate on-the-ice action. The Genesis cart, for



Brett Hull Hockey has digitized pictures of team members after they score.

example, is 16-Meg, twice as large as the Genesis version of **NHL '94**, and features battery backup for not only a game but an entire season. It is also the only hockey video game with complete play-by-play, courtesy Al Michaels, one of the best announcers in the business.

One feature **Brett Hull Hockey** offers which **NHL '94** eliminated is fighting. While it's true that fighting occurs in real



hockey, featuring it in a simulation is largely pointless since there is no way to simulate the actual effect (if any) in game terms.

Brett Hull's most distinctive features, however, are its coaching capabilities and visual presentation. For the first time in a hockey video game, players can set coaching parameters, determining how aggressively the team plays. The graphic display, meanwhile, is a 35 percent

raised angle perspective that brings the gamer quite close to the ice, as opposed to **NHL '94's** slightly angled topdown POV.

The upside to this presentation is immediately obvious: the player gets a real sense of involvement in the on-ice action. The downside is also pretty clear: it isn't as easy to distinguish individual players and the game itself is quite difficult to play. Unlike a real hockey player who has the advantage of peripheral vision, it can be difficult to get a sense of how a play is shaping up without visual access to an overview of the rink. The addition of a directional audio technology such as QSound would have helped enormously.

Lord Stanley's Cup

SNES owners, however, frequently on the short end of the stick where sports games are concerned, can sample an even better on-the-ice hockey simulation—Nintendo's **NHL Stanley Cup**.

While both the **Stanley Cup** and **Brett Hull** SNES games make extensive use of Mode 7 effects, and the *Accolade* effort offers a superior statistical base, the Nintendo game is the clear winner in the looks department.

Developed by Sculptured Software using a refined version of the engine first seen in **NCAA Basketball** (Nintendo/SNES), **NHL Stanley Cup** takes the player right down onto the frozen surface of a hockey rink. Unlike **NCAA**, however, the use of Mode 7 rotation effects doesn't leave players with a bad case of vertigo. Moreover, the game isn't being played in a black void; there are seats and cheering fans visible in all directions as background reference points.



Nintendo's NHL Stanley Cup offers a unique perspective for game players.

Nintendo did the Right Thing and signed a deal with the NHL for team names, logos and the use of the Stanley Cup name, but don't expect to see actual NHL players since no pact was inked with the NHL Players' Association.

NHL Stanley Cup offers three play modes: Exhibition, Season Play and Best of Seven (the Stanley Cup format). The Season Play version allows a full 84-game schedule. While it doesn't offer the players, stats, and overall realism of **NHL '94** and **Brett Hull Hockey**, **NHL Stanley Cup** is undeniably one of the most original and exciting simulations around.



The master himself, **Wayne Gretzky**, has graced PCs with his third hockey game.

Computerized Cross-Checks

While ice hockey proliferates wildly in the video game arena, its movement in the computer software marketplace has been slower. Bethesda's **Wayne Gretzky** series comprise the finest all-around hockey games for players interested in a strong, stat-based simulation, and a new edition is almost certainly on the way.

But EA Sports has unexpectedly jumped into the fray with an excellent PC version of **NHL '94**, which comes packed with a great quality paperback, *EA Sports Presents Excerpts from NHL Official Guide & Record Book 1992-93*. The computer game, which was developed by EA Canada, has almost all of the outstanding features from the video game along with a stat compiler for seasonal action.

Hockey is hot, game mavens, and it's getting hotter all the time. So, as hockey ventures into such exotic ports as Anaheim and Tampa Bay, it also expands its franchise in electronic sports.

— Bill Kunkel

JAMMIN' WITH THE EARL OF FUNKATRON

AN INTERVIEW WITH GREG JOHNSON

by Bill Kunkel

"A lot of what motivates me," explained Greg Johnson, co-creator with Mark Voorfanger of the groundbreaking *ToeJam & Earl* games, "is frustration in what I see in other games. I always start out being very excited by games or ideas of games, and then experience a lot of disappointment and frustration when I feel like I'm looking at the same thing again. So a lot of

what motivates me is a desire to go in some new direction—any new direction. Of course, there's a price to pay for that; there are a lot of people who don't want anything new, and they're very happy with the market. Unfortunately, those are the people out spending the money because often the people who are frustrated just walk away."

Greg certainly went in a new direction when he designed the original *ToeJam & Earl* for Sega with his new partner, Cal Berkeley grad and veteran video game programming wiz Voorfanger. In an era when platform games held the video game market in a deathgrip, Johnson threw away the rulebook and created a world that resembled a multi-story office building. Each level consisted of a huge, flat plane, with a variety of topographical features and a host of daffy characters, all viewed from an angled topdown perspective that liberated gamers from the two-dimensional confines of the side-scrolling format.

The original game wound up selling around 350,000 copies worldwide; an impressive



number, certainly, but a disappointment to Sega, Greg, and Mark, all of whom believed they had another **Sonic** on their hands. "I remember that from the minute we walked in the door at Sega, and through the first half of the development process, we were told that Sega needed identifiable characters, just like Nintendo's Mario, and maybe **ToeJam & Earl** would be those characters. Then, sort of two-thirds of the way through, **Sonic** came on the scene. And [suddenly] we felt like we were competing with **Sonic**. So, we were definitely kind of perceived in the same class." But when the innovative product didn't produce the same kind of numbers as Sega's pet hedgehog, everyone was disappointed.

And so the question inevitably arose regarding the presentation of the second game. And, when **ToeJam & Earl 2** was first previewed to the electronics industry at Winter CES '93, there were many in attendance, this writer included, whose hearts sank at the first glimpse of... a platform game?

The story of **T&E**'s odyssey into the side-scrolling universe is an interesting and instructive tale. "We actually started the second game [using the original engine] and worked on it for three months or so. And there was some really neat stuff in it: we had snow and ice that they slid around in, walls they could go through and cliffs [they could explore] and stuff. But then we did an animation sequence for the Intro with really big characters, and they had so much more personality, and it was so much fun to watch that animation sequence! We watched it over and over again and we stood there kind of depressed, thinking: 'Oh, man, this is what it should look like! We wanna see more of these guys!' That, in conjunction with the fact that Sega had recently expressed some disappointment that the sales of the first game hadn't hit their core audience strong enough, made us think that that core audience wasn't going to be very excited about this new game and we probably wouldn't get the kind of support that we'd want and it ended up being a kind of depressing experience."

So, Team ToeJam set its collective jaw and decided to start from scratch, creating a game that "would fill us with more energy, because it would be new and different, and allow us to do a more cartoony style of animation." But also, we tried to walk a little closer to the line of Sega's core audience. We had also battled a lot with what the Genesis can do in the first game, with just one and the split screen [in Two-Player Mode].

because the machine is really designed to do these side-scrolling games. So we decided, why not do what the machine was built for?

"Also, one of the things I really wanted to do—and a lot of people, especially reviewers, aren't going to see this because it doesn't start until level five—is build in stories. I like to write short stories, and I love character and dialogue. I still feel very strongly about the world of **ToeJam & Earl** and I wanted to build more of that, and I didn't feel I would be able to do it [with the original engine]. So now you have characters, and it let me play a little more with the insanity of their world."



Whoa! Funkatron provides players with a variety of crazy climate conditions.

Greg declares himself very happy with the end result, but admits it was a difficult project. "It was definitely a struggle. It took a while to get this design put together, because there is a lot of precedent set for how to do these side-scrolling games and I wanted very much to do something that would emphasize exploration. But to do that and not lose the audience that wants that mad, button-pushing adrenaline rush was kind of walking a line and it remains to be seen how that audience will respond to it. And all along I've had concerns about losing our audience from the first game; those people who told me: 'I hate video games, but I love your game!' or 'My wife, she won't play video games, but she'll play yours!' That's what we heard more than anything else, and that was very dear to me because that also describes me. Mark is a little different; he's not as much of a gamer. He doesn't play games or really love them; he enjoys seeing them, and he and I share a lot of values, but his motivation is more to build something for the market that already exists. So we had a constant little tug-of-war going on as we developed this and hopefully it yielded a better product and didn't

do too much damage to our friendship. But we did have our moments."

In **ToeJam 2**, our heroes are back on Funkatron, but they didn't return alone; a whole bunch of goofy humans stowed away somehow on their tiny ship, and they're literally draining Funkatron of its funk. It's up to **ToeJam & Earl**, therefore, to round them up and return their world to its pristine, pumped-up pre-invasion status.

"It's always kind of suspect when you hear people say 'I'm gonna sit down and make a funny game.' I certainly didn't. It's just a matter of having fun in the process of doing it. I guess that's really the only way to end up with something that people will laugh at—kind of lighten up a little bit while you're making it. A lot of stuff in the first game, like the burping, was a little bit gross at first. I burped and we heard the recording back and went: 'That's disgusting! We can't put that in there!' But then we realized that we were laughing at it, and that other people might laugh as well."

However, the idea that hip-hop music would be a defining characteristic of the game, was there from the beginning.

"That was what we first approached Sega with; the little identity-tag line we used to pitch the game was that it would be the first thing built for the MTV Generation, for the hip-hop culture. Because everything up to then was either very techie-cool robots or ultra-cutesy."

Graphics have been another major component of both **ToeJam & Earl** games, and the second presented greater challenges. "I am not much of an artist," Greg confesses with too much humility. "I did the artwork for the first game, with some help from my wife [Avril Harrison, who has worked for both EA and LucasArts and now toils for Broderbund, but who is perhaps best known for her stock paintings in *Deluxe Paint!*], who did the Hula Girl, the Carrotman and Cupid. But in the second game, the artwork goes well beyond my capabilities. So we got a fellow named Kirk Henderson, an old school animator who did all his work on paper, both the character animations, which he did as line drawings, and the backgrounds, which he produced as color pictures on boards. I was sort of the lacker dog menial laborer who had to take his work and cut it into pieces and squeeze it into color palettes and the two scrolls and make it work on the Genesis. And I did some filler work, like I did all the squiggly stuff in the *Hyperfunk Zone*, which was nice to be able to get a little loose for a change."

—Bill Kupke

Building Jurassic Park

A behind-the-scenes look at the making of Ocean's venture into dinosaurland.

by Russ Ceccola

It is no surprise that there are a different Jurassic Park video games for sale in stores across America. *Jurassic Park* was an enormous success as a book. Its even greater success as a film was bound to translate well to other platforms, from toys and T-shirts to other collectibles and video games.

Sega's Genesis and Sega CD *Jurassic Park* games exploited the abilities of their newly formed Sega Multimedia Studios. Ocean went a different route and assigned a crew of their own graphics, sound and design experts to produce the spectacular Super NES *Jurassic Park* game. In many ways, Ocean's Super NES dinosaur game reflects the 10 months the design team worked tirelessly to get things exactly right.



Special hint signs come up when racing through the Super NES *Jurassic Park*.

Jurassic Park follows the plot of Michael Crichton's book more closely than Steven Spielberg's record-breaking film. The object of the game is to guide scientist Dr. Alan Grant around the island to restore power, eliminate deadly dinosaurs, destroy the nests of the breeding velociraptors (Raptors) and eventually escape the island on a helicopter. A few members of the design team spoke to **Electronic Games** and



revealed a lot of the thought and preparation that led up to this plot and its presentation. Ocean Software Manager Mark Rogers explained that the design team had access to the book before the movie script. In fact, the script wasn't available until two months into the game's design. Prior to *Jurassic Park*'s commencement, Ocean was working on a 3-D engine for future games. Rogers explained that "we developed the game's two views before the game itself and thought that the 3-D view would be perfect for *Jurassic Park* when the project came along."

The game's overhead angled view and interior 3-D views contribute greatly to the game's excitement because each view matches its placement perfectly. Game designer Jonathan Beard described the team's goal as "more depth than a sideways platform contest. We wanted to make it simple enough for the younger generation to play, but interesting enough to appeal to older players too."

The extents of *Jurassic Park*'s island take up 256 (16 X 16) screens. Exteriors artist Chris Kerry produced the map based on the film studio's island layout. In addition to the outside views, there are a number of interior locations to make the game more realistic and break up the action. The exterior graphics take up more space on the cartridge than the building interiors and actually took more effort to design than the 3-D views. Kerry explained that "the number of images and the strange angle made the exterior

programming more complex." There are over 500 active dinosaur sprites at any time on the island and a large number of animations for every dinosaur and Dr. Grant. For example, Dr. Grant has about 18 different animations. The unusual angle requires more work to clearly show these actions. Additionally, the

artists had to redesign many of the outdoor areas to make room for the larger dinosaurs that just didn't fit on some of the narrow paths or in the small clearings originally chosen for them.

The interior views will impress players even more because they have never seen detailed 3-D graphics as smooth as those in *Jurassic Park*'s buildings. Interiors artist Paul Robinson praised the hardware when he remarked that "the real breakthrough was making the Super NES work in the way we wanted. The techniques are all in the machine—we just had to figure out how to invoke them."

Robinson and the other artists designed the levels of the buildings first before they placed any of the objects or dinosaurs. The scaled graphics techniques were enhanced to add excitement to *Jurassic Park*, but they used knowledge Robinson and his cohorts had learned before. Robinson said "the views and graphics really work best on the Super NES or, perhaps, a PC. The views we chose for the Super NES are not the normal views you might see—it made the project difficult." Robinson spent many hours on the interiors for the game



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and confessed that, after some time, he "got sick of working in that view."

The dinosaurs will challenge the player, again and again over the course of a game. A complete game might involve as many as 300 dinosaur battles. Many of the dinosaurs exhibit artificial intelligence, particularly the Raptors. Each Raptor has his/her own attack pattern, but within two or three attacks in close proximity to each other, they work together to weaken the player.

This pack mentality was an important aspect of the Raptors both in the book and the movie. The design team made it happen on the small tube too.

Players will especially encounter many of the comp-sognathus (Compy) dinosaurs in the game, although they were absent from the movie. Kerry explained that it was easy to put them in Jurassic Park: "Compy's are great because they're small!" Players also know how annoying they are.

Because none of the film's dinosaurs had been constructed by the time the team began the game's development, the artists gathered information from a variety of places in order to animate the creatures. Fortunately, they were able to visit the studios of Phil Tippett, the movie's animator, who had just begun to design the attack patterns of the dinosaurs and think about how he planned to make them move. Additionally, the artists were able to model their dinosaurs on the line of Kenner Toys action figures which had already been approved by the studio.

Kenner used the guidelines for their creatures that was presented to Ocean's

artists, so it was easier for them to produce acceptable creatures since they had a more concrete idea of their look and size. The color guide changed over the course of the team's development, when the film's art department slowly

discussed the color palette. "The colors were not as bright as they were for the movie," says Phillips. "But we had to stick to the palette that the artists gave us, so we had to make the colors exactly right. Paint couldn't handle the palette, so we had to develop our own graphics tools."

Jurassic Park also pushes the envelope in the sound department with its Dolby Surround Sound and sound effects gleaned from the studio's library.

Musician and sound effects specialist Jon Dunn obtained the specifications for Dolby Surround Sound and ensured that Jurassic Park met them. The film used the Digital Experience in many theaters as a special bonus to moviegoers. Players with the right televisions will also experience an audio treat with Dunn's Surround Sound output. Dunn also managed to obtain permission to use many of the dinosaur sound effects from the movie which were given to him on DAT tapes. Players will appreciate the extra efforts to make Jurassic Park sound as good as it looks.

One humorous anecdote that the design team related shows just how small the gaming world really is. When they visited Tippett's studios, they discovered that Sega's design team was there on the same day. They made a conscious effort to avoid each other, but eventually wound up on opposite ends of the same path walking toward each other. As they neared a central point like a show-down, the two groups started laughing and talked for a while. They actually got along quite

well. Ocean's largely British team remarked that they were "nice blokes."

Ocean's Super NES *Jurassic Park* is a challenging game, but one that players will visit again and again until they finally explore the island. There are secret levels (with interior and exterior) for the more adventurous players to find and a contest that encourages players to find the Easter Eggs scattered across the island.

The design team worked against a tight deadline to ensure that the game was as fun as it could be. Naturally, they wanted the game to be released as soon as possible. Beard hopes that players like Jurassic Park and explained this thinking when he said that "when you produce a title, a year later nobody remembers how long it took you to produce the game, but only the game itself." Jurassic Park for the Super NES is certainly memorable and one of Ocean's best titles to date. Hopefully, the movie's astounding success at the box office will draw fans of the motion picture into the video game world of Jurassic Park.

But watch out for those pesky T-Rex'!



Players will have to pick up the heavy artillery in order to protect their hides!

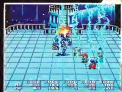


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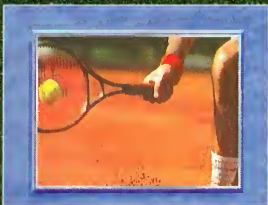
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SERVE'S UP!

A NEW GENERATION OF ELECTRONIC TENNIS GAMES

by Amie Katz

It's too cold for the grass or clay courts, but electronic ones are always available for all-out tennis: Tennis has been around as long as there have been video games. Electronic gamers have hit a ball back and forth across the screen for more than two decades.



Still, it's hard to imagine how a gaming pioneer might view the modern incarnation of his favorite contest. After a lull in the late 1980s, publishers made a strong comeback last year with several 16-bit titles. Now there's a new group of tennis titles already out or scheduled for release this winter.

Davis Cup Tennis Tour (Tengen/Genesis) simulates international competition with a roster of imaginary tennis aces from around the world. **Davis Cup** has a slew of customizing options and modes,



Davis Cup Tennis has more emphasis on shot selection strategy than quickness,

which boosts replayability considerably over bare bones renditions of the sport.

A human player can compete against the console or another person in Singles, join forces to take on two robot matmen in a doubles match, or play doubles against another human with a robot partner on each side.

A pre-game menu offers a choice of five types of games: Practice, Exhibition, Davis Cup, Tournament and Championship. Practice has four variations, each of which targets one phase of the game. For instance, you can work on that cannonball serve or precise shot placement, depending on which area needs the most work.

Championship sends the gamer on a globe-

travelling campaign. This adds role-playing elements like tour expenses and prize money to give the gamer a taste of what it's like to be a pro tennis star. A pass-word system allows the user to resume a championship campaign after an interruption.

The players are unusually large, up to twice the size of the ones in rival cartridges. The trapezoidal court is shown from a shallow angle. This foreshortens the court, reducing the territory the player must cover, though the arrangement also gives less time to react to an opponent's shot. At the Beginner, difficulty setting, the player moves into position automatically.

In **Davis Cup**, shot selection is the focus of strategy. The gamer chooses the stroke's type, power and direction. **Davis Cup** works well with the standard Genesis controller, but a six-button unit improves playability.

International Tennis Tour (Taito America/SNES) is essentially the SNES alternative to **Davis Cup Tennis** on the Genesis. The main difference is that Taito declined to purchase the Davis Cup



International Tennis Tour features a comprehensive shot practice mode.

license, so there is a Nations Cup option that replaces the Tengen title's Davis Cup mode.

Allowing for differences between the two consoles, play is pretty much the same. The Genesis graphics are brighter and a little more detailed, but the SNES color pallet is more attractive. The play on the Genesis is a little faster, but it's fast enough on the SNES, too.



Wimbledon Tennis for the Genesis gives detailed previews of players.

Wimbledon Championship Tennis

(Sega/Genesis) is good old-fashioned arcade tennis implemented with the latest design and programming techniques. The one-to-four player game shows the vertically oriented court from two-thirds overhead perspective, the traditional viewing angle for tennis titles that stress competition over authenticity.

Not that **Wimbledon** lacks ambience. The trappings of the prestigious tennis tournament are visible throughout. The tournament mode conducts three rounds of three-set matches to crown the king of British tennis.

The difference between this cartridge and true simulations is that **Wimbledon** subordinates everything to play action and playability. Other games give a true picture of big-time tennis, but none are more fun to play, especially head-to-head against another gamer. This would bode well for the action-oriented player.

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The CD-i Open

While most of today's tennis simulations offer a high degree of bells and whistles, no program rings those bells and blows those whistles with the finesse of **International Tennis Open** from Philips for its CD-i console. Created by Infogrames, one of the leading French development houses, for Philips Interactive Media France, **International Tennis Open** is the strongest entertainment entry in the CD-i library, and one of the best tennis games to be found anywhere.

The program begins with the usual FMV fanfare, but quickly gets down to business with a main menu of seven play selections: Match, Tournament, Training, Options, Nationality, Info and Demo Match. The Options Menu allows the gamer to set the Difficulty and Play Mode, load in a previously saved match, set the commentary



International Tennis Open features the enhanced sound and graphics of CD-i.

and language, and perform a number of other bits of fine tuning.

There are four distinct methods of controlling the player surrogate, dubbed Victor Player. In the Manual Moves Mode, the gamer's only job is to get player to the ball and the computer does the rest; in Manual Shots Defensive and Manual Shots Offensive Modes, the computer gets the

player to the ball and the gamer controls the racket, the only difference being whether Victor plays defensively or aggressively. In the Fully Manual format, the gamer controls both Player's movement and his racket.

Users also get to select among a trio of opponents, as well as three amazingly realistic court surfaces: clay, grass and cement, with the ball acting appropriately in each medium.

But perhaps the game's most spectacular feature is the visual representation and animation of the players. Each contestant in this CD-i Open is beautifully digitized and capable of fully and realistically articulated movement. All of this in addition to the game's realistic sound effects, outstanding speech, and "Wide World of Sports" quality production values. **International Tennis Open** is every racqueteer's electronic dream come true.

— Bill Kunkel



Wimbledon Tennis also lets players try their skills on the famous center court.

Andre Agassi Tennis (TecMagik/SNES) is a one- or two-player arcade net cartridge with single- and doubles competition against an array of eight racquet stars. A solo gamer can practice or play against any of the stars, while two humans can go head-to-head or cooperate in a double match against machine-directed foes.

Besides Agassi, there are seven fictional players, each with a unique style: Tiger Ball (great speed); Don Matt (ideal accuracy); George King (good court movement); Bob Chin (killer serve); Ron Peppo (strong return shots); Cassie Nova (tricky placements); and Carol Ark (impoor serves and volleys).

Available play modes are Practice, Exhibition, Tournament and Skins Game. The latter is a refreshing change from conventional tennis, since each point has a different dollar value. Matches can take place on grass, clay, or indoors,

another triggers a smash. Moving the direction disk while a ball is in flight alters the direction.

The mechanics are straight-forward. The D-button moves the netter around the court. One button initiates, and

another triggers a smash. Moving the direction disk while a ball is in flight alters the direction.

There's nothing revolutionary about the graphics. **Andre Agassi Tennis** employs a vertical, non-scrolling court with little in the way of side animation or other fills. The players switch sides after each set, though the finished game may offer a permanent orientation as an option.

Andre Agassi Tennis for Game Gear

Speed and style define flamboyant tennis star Andre Agassi's aggressive play style. Speed and style also define the Game Gear game with his name on it.

Fast action and dramatic moves are the rule in this Sega game where players with unique strengths and weaknesses lob, smash, volley and make desperate dives for the ball.

On-screen, Agassi, controlled by the player, sprints like a madman to return serves and volleys. Gamers will be able to control Andre Agassi and 7 other powerful (though fictional) tennis players on grass, clay, hardcourt or indoor courts in singles or doubles matches and tournaments. Players can even set up a demonstration game and watch as the computer controls all opponents in a match to see who really rules the court.

For gamers who want high powered hard-court action to go, look for **Andre Agassi Tennis** on Game Gear in early '94.

—John Hardin



Imagels everything, as evident from the obvious background advertising.

Since **Andre Agassi** is still in development, it is not possible to comment on the finer points, such as balance and difficulty. There's nothing very fancy about **Andre Agassi Tennis**, but what's there is fairly enjoyable, and should give tennis fans a run for their money as far as overall entertainment value is concerned.

After all, Mr. Agassi is quite the competitor on the court, so his game should reflect his attitude.



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HOUR OF THE

SEAWOLF

By Ed Dille

One of the most successful simulators ever produced by Electronic Arts is

688 Attack Sub.

With the impending arrival of **Seawolf**, 688's position of preeminence is bound to be usurped. The **Seawolf** is the most advanced attack submarine in the world. At almost three billion dollars a copy, the **Seawolf** was primarily intended to counter new generation Soviet sub designs (such as the Akula SSN and the Typhoon SSBN) and hunt down the latter in their bastions, from which an ICBM attack against the U.S. could be mounted. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, however, **Seawolf** and other high cost defense construction programs fell prey to budgetary constraints. Unfortunately, political actions beyond the control of

Congress could prove these decisions premature.

Seawolf, the game, extrapolates current events to a dark conclusion. Therein, more militant factions within the C.I.S. regain control and the Soviet Union is reborn. Further, these political reactionaries are not satisfied to return to the former balance of power. Perceiving indecisiveness and weakness in U.S. foreign policy, they seek to swing the political pendulum in their favor. Tensions over Cuba lead to isolated skirmishes between Soviet and U.S. Naval forces. These, in turn, lead to full-scale blue water battles. Soon, Europe, China,

Japan and a number of smaller nations are involved. World War III has begun.

The **Player** takes command of the **Seawolf**, one of only three critical assets that can turn the tide of battle. The war is not expected to last long enough to allow further construction. As such, protecting the submarine is just as critical as taking the battle to the enemy. **Players** must seek out and destroy enemy shipping and submarines, escort high value assets like aircraft carriers and military convoys, plus conduct crucial reconnaissance missions.

Mastery of the game requires learning the intricacies of the ocean biosphere, not from the standpoint of a tourist but that of a tactician. To the submariner, thermal gradients, sound channels and biological activity form the filter through which the world outside the hull is perceived. What you hear translates into what you see, and what you don't see can kill you!

To recreate this dependency on sound propagation accurately, Electronic Arts has incorporated over 100 distinct 16 Bit stereo sound samples as unique sonar signatures. Above 40 types of surface ships and 25 submarines are acoustically modeled such that, with practice on the **Seawolf's** Sonar Waterfall Display, users will be able to classify targets and threats without ever visually acquiring them. Natural phenomena, like whale song and dolphin clicks, are also included to enhance the feeling of actually being in the undersea environment. If a good pair of headphones are used in conjunction with the game, these sound files generate a strong feeling of 3-D audio imaging.

Once a target has been detected and classified, there are a plethora of engagement options. **Seawolf's** weapons systems include Tomahawk and Harpoon submerged-launch, anti-ship cruise missiles and four distinct variants of the MK 48 Advanced Capability Torpedo (ADCAP). Unlike traditional torpedo

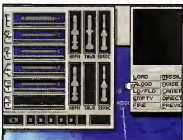


It's a hit! Commanders can receive realistic outside tactical views.



Seawolf has a variety of strategic maps and sub-menus to view and utilize.

designs, the ADCAP does not attempt to hit its target directly. Instead, the torpedo explodes underneath the keel of the target, creating a massive pressure wave and shock bubble that literally lifts the ship out of the water, where its own weight will snap it in two. If one is daring enough to pop up the periscope and watch an ADCAP at work, the animation EA has created is quite spectacular.



Players have complete control of all the complex weapon systems onboard.

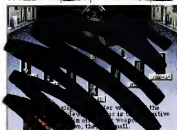
About 33 missions are included, which may be linked into a campaign that spans the entire war (provided one can survive that long) or played individually. EA has also included several two-player modern only missions. Connectivity is smooth and the users have the ability to chat back and forth while they scour the depths looking for one another. Although the computer opponents are tough, nothing ever recreates the cat and mouse feel of underwater combat against another human opponent.

Seawolf is complex and quite unlike other military simulators on the market. As such, players may find themselves in need of guidance from time to time. If this proves to be the case, look for **Seawolf: The Official Strategy Guide**, available from Prima Publishing, to aid the quest to become the ultimate denizen of the deep, prowling unseen beneath the waves and striking at will.

WE WANTED TO EXPLAIN HOW ACCURATE OUR F-117 STEALTH SIMULATOR IS, BUT THE PENTAGON GOT A HOLD OF OUR AD.

Code YY456-Z5572
Document #72. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Make no mistake, F-117 Night Storm, featuring the F-117A Nighthawk, is the top of the line high-end flight simulator available to the public. It is also the first F-117 on Sega Genesis in the 16 MEG format [REDACTED] making it the [REDACTED] powerful and authentic copy of the world's most sophisticated strike fighter. 16 MEGs of digitized speech and bit-mapped special effects, as well as [REDACTED] make for big pay-offs when targets are struck. Not unlike the CIA Mission over Libya when [REDACTED]



[REDACTED]. Your mission begins at the [REDACTED] training grounds in [REDACTED], Nevada. Further instruction [REDACTED] Baghdad, MIG-infested [REDACTED] flashpoints.



Cuba, Grenada, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Libya, Panama [REDACTED], Peru, and others. F-117 Night Storm even has movie insets that pictorially illustrate the unfolding gameplay. For example, [REDACTED]. There are two modes of play: arcade and campaign (for a [REDACTED] career) [REDACTED] which basically means the specs of this simulator are frighteningly realistic. For example, revolutionary infra-red displays and laser targeting. Not to mention [REDACTED]. Your wingspan



is 43 ft. 4 inches, overall length 65 ft. 11 inches, body length 55 ft. 1 inch, height 12 ft. 5 inches, wing/body area 1070 sq. ft. Powered by [REDACTED] non-afterburning engines. Thrust 10,600 lb., bypass ratio 34:1, weight 1820 lb. Max take-off [REDACTED] por fuel 13,000 lb., weapon load [REDACTED] s. Max mach speed [REDACTED], max speed at sea level [REDACTED] best max speed at 35,000 ft [REDACTED]

Weapons available: GBU-27 Paveway, AGM-88A HARM, AGM-65E Maverick. [REDACTED] **16 MEG**



[REDACTED]. Basically, this F-117 flight simulator is loaded down with all the bells and whistles. No ifs, ands, or buts.



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The Philips Vision

by Joyce Worley and Bill Kunkel

Unlike most companies with entertainment-oriented electronics products, Philips discovered the game business by accident. "When the company first introduced CD-I, the focus was not on games," admitted Dave McElhatten, President of Philips new Game Division, as he discussed the company's vision of the future for CD-I. Nonetheless, the company salted the usual collection of classic strategy games among its initial software releases. To its astonishment, the games sold very well—especially **ABC Sports Presents the Palm Springs Open, Pinball and Battleship.**

With the sales figures in, Philips wasted no time breaking up software into three categories: home entertainment (music and movies), children/family products and games. Says McElhatten: "There's an insatiable demand for games."

In fact, with the addition of the M-PEG Digital Video Card, he points out that the system's game production capabilities have been significantly advanced. Nonetheless, McElhatten is painfully aware

The Game Gauntlet

Here's a quick look at some of Philips' better CD-I games:

The Palm Springs Open

(Developed by Fathom Pictures)

It isn't **Links 386**, but this golf sim offers a huge, digitized, on-screen golfer and plenty of actual scenery. The game offers play-by-play announcing, club selection, and user control over golfer position, shot power, hooking and slicing. This type of game doesn't suffer as much from slower access as some sports contests. (Rating: B-)

that some multimedia programs add video at the cost of reduced play action and assured us: "We're working to incorporate video into the games without affecting game play."

They're lining up strong talent to help implement the vision. Along with the U.K. and European game development groups (including Infogrames), Philips is also hammering out deals to bring more American developers, such as LucasArts, Virgin and Accolade, into the loop.

"We see the CD-I as an entertainment machine in the living room, not just stuck away in the kid's room. We will offer action arcade games, but we also want to aim at a slightly higher age level of player, and some of the games will have a very broad-based appeal.

"We have a pretty good library in place," Dave observed. "Nearly 150 programs. Of these, there are probably 15-20 games, not counting kideo, trivia games and so forth. But now we're aiming for one or two breakthrough

Space Ace

(Developed by International Creative Digital Image)

Perfect duplicate of the original Don Bluth (creator of **Dragon's Lair** and the film *All Dogs Go To Heaven*) coin-op. One beautiful piece of modern animation. (B-)

Phantom Express

(Developed by Philips POV Entertainment)

It's a bit of a cheat, but this cool looking follow-up to **Mystic Midway** is a modern version of the British computer game, **Roller Coaster Rumbler**, which combines a target shooting game with a ride on a roller coaster. Unfortunately, all the target sequences occur while the ride is going through a tunnel. The non-



Get me outta here! **Space Ace** comes to the CD-I, and he must stop the evil Borf.

products per month; we plan to have between 15 and 24 top-quality state-of-the-art games ready during the next year.

"We're being very selective."

Philips' massive relaunch of the CD-I and its new emphasis on game software for the system demonstrate its resolve to stay in the race.

Interactive sequences are beautiful. (C)

Voyeur

(Developed by Philips POV)

Not very interactive, but one of the very best non-action FMV-driven games. Shot using real actors (and starring Robert Culp), the game lives up to its title with some spicy footage and excellent production values. You'll enjoy being a Peeping Tom. (B+)

Kether (Developed by Infogrames)

Could stand having its excitement level punched up—the player's ship needs a gun, for example—but the polygon graphics are real retina-thrashers. Infogrames is the French developer that has given us such eye-popping non-starters as

Captain Blood (Mindscape); Infogrames' games are gorgeous, but they need to play some **Tetris** because they don't have a clue about play value. (C-)



Caesar's World of Boxing provides squared-circle excitement and thrills.

Caesar's World of Boxing

(Developed by Philips POV)

Not as good as the best 16-Bit boxing sims, but stronger than you might expect. The game uses a side view perspective that displays the pugilists from the waist up and eliminates the ability to use the ring for its strategic value. (C+)

Mad Dog McCree

(Developed by American Laser Group)

Best visual presentation yet of the coin-op hit. Once Philips gets a light gun out, this will be unbeatable. (A-)

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MEGARACE

SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS REVS UP RACING GAMES

by John W. Hardin

In the future, will people from all over the world get their kicks in a virtual reality auto-combat game, instead of getting together the old-fashioned way and killing each other? They will if the Software Toolworks vision comes true.

MegaRace players assume the role of an auto-combat racer who must make a living on the virtual racing circuit, in a futuristic spectator sport. The violent races are the fodder of a huge, jaded, entertainment-hungry audience watching via Virtual World Broadcast Television.



MegaRace features smooth graphics that pull the player into the simulation.

Because it simulates virtual reality (yes, this game is a simulation of a simulation), and anything is possible in virtual reality, **MegaRace** goes beyond conventional driving and shooting games with its surreal landscapes and mind-blowing track layouts.

The player races armed, customized hot-rods through a series of cityscapes, each of which bears three tracks. Software Toolworks promises at least eight different cars and 15 unique tracks, from New San Francisco to underwater worlds (where the player may have to dodge fish while negotiating the track.)

Even wilder tracks have to be seen to be believed, but try to imagine racing through the body of a whale, or speeding along the inside of a working particle accelerator...

Driving over icons on the roadway affects the car. Some provide a powerful boost of speed, slow the car down, or bestow firepower upon cars. Others do more unpredictable things, like switching your and your opponents' cars in mid-race(!) Players can even pick up CD icons on the track to be played in the virtual combat car's virtual CD-player.

Along with the CD music, **MegaRace** will use full speech, as commentators give voice-overs and updates on the action.

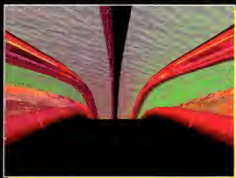
MegaRace promises to be visually stunning; the designers promise that it'll be part of the new standard in gaming graphics. The roadway scrolls so smoothly that one expects to feel the twists and turns as the road goes through impossible loops and corkscrews like a roller coaster from hell: Landscapes are so finely detailed they appear to be fractally generated (we asked, they're not.)

Each car is fully rendered in 3-D Studio graphics, and the visual package is topped off with more than 25 minutes of digitized video footage.

Amidst all this luxury, don't forget that

this is still combat. Gamers can get their goodies the old-fashioned way, by blowing up the other guys and taking their stuff. To accommodate the warring parties, the player can shoot at or even crash into the other guy's car. Each of these gangs have distinctive styles and personalities that make it necessary for the gamer to choose the most advantageous vehicles and weaponry to suit each challenge.

Players without CD drives will have to get their simulated virtual entertainment elsewhere; Software Toolworks plans to release **MegaRace** only on CD. The PC version, which will run on systems with a 386/33 or better processor, MCGA graphics capabilities, 2MB of RAM (4 are recommended) and MS-DOS of 3.3 or later, is already available. The Sega CD



should be out during the first quarter of this year. Look for the 3DO version later this year, as well.

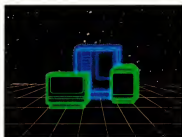
The game uses advanced compression techniques which permit real-time transfers of data from the CD-ROM. From the gamer's point of view, this promises quicker access and screen updating, and

fewer of those annoying waits while the computer goes back to disk for information updates.

Competing in the **MegaRace** may not be the most civilized way to spend a virtual Saturday night, but it's still a heckuva lot more fun than the Home Shopping Club. Jump in and have fun with **MegaRace!**



VIDEO GAME GALLERY



Flashback

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

U.S. Gold
SNES

THEME	Action
MEGABITS	12
PLAYERS	1
LEVELS	7

SNES owners, rejoice! U.S. Gold's **Flashback** survived the platform jump from the Genesis with the important elements intact: incredible graphics, cinematic scenes and solid sound support.

The player takes the role of amnesia victim Conrad Hart, who, while searching for his misplaced identity, must battle alien conspirators and their minions not on Earth, but also on other worlds. The player-as-amnesiac is the most overused game device this side of the kidnapped princess, but fortunately **Flashback** doesn't keep players in the dark for very long. During the course of the game, the player-character not only regains his memory, but discovers allies who offer advice and clues that will allow him to finish his mission and save Earth.

Level One opens on the planet Titan. In the planet's artificial jungle, Hart awakens to the realization that he remembers neither past events nor the circumstances that have placed him in this savage and primitive land. However, if he survives the plastic jungle, and makes it to New Washington, the setting for Level Two, Conrad not only regains his memory, but also locates his friend, Ian, from whom Hart learns that he must make the expensive journey back to Earth to thwart the alien conspiracy.

The best way to earn money quickly, for **Flashback**'s hero anyway, is to continue to Level Three and become a contestant on the TV game show, *The Death Tower*. The Tower is a dangerous labyrinth protected by formidable, fast-moving Replicants. Level Four brings Conrad to Earth, where the aliens

discover his identity and attempt to eliminate him. After eluding the extra-terrestrial bad guys, he must seek out their headquarters, all the while avoiding Replicants, watchdogs, laser cameras and rockets.

On the Secret Base dubbed "Paradise" on Level Five, Hart uncovers the aliens' plan to dominate the human race. When he's discovered and captured by the aliens, the player is set up for a journey to Levels Six and Seven, set on the evil aliens' home planet, Morph, which Conrad must destroy.



Conrad Hart must utilize a variety of special objects in order to escape.

Flashback encourages Hart to interact with his surroundings, but, unlike a typical adventure game in which the p-c has unlimited access to a list of commands, interactions here are more limited. Hart can pick up any small object he encounters, and he can talk to other characters. But tasks such as activating objects, and recharging shields or cartridges are totally situation-specific. Conrad must acquire a number of objects throughout the game including: holocubes, which contain important information; force fields; stones; credits; magnetic cartridges, which creates an energy source; mechanical mice, which set off pressure pads and cameras; exploding mice, which detonate if touched while moving; ID cards; teleport receivers and teleport remote controls.

Besides the various enemies who shoot at will, there are a plethora of lethal objects in the game including: land mines, falling mines, laser cannons, disintegrator and electrified floors. Fortunately, Conrad can take four hits before he dies. Unfortunately, there is no health indicator on-screen, so the player has no immediate reading of Hart's strength.

Unlike far too many current electronic games, **Flashback** has the distinction of offering better graphics during the play sequences than in the cut scenes. The background graphics are frequently stunning, with the extremely evocative jungle scenes a standout. But the game's most impressive visual feature is its sophisticated character animation. The player-character moves with a fluid ease and executes leaps and tumbles with a catlike grace that is as well presented as anything in the field.

Flashback is not a standard side-scroller; instead the playfield consists of screens which are generated, in their entirety, one at a time. When the p-c moves off the edge of one screen, s/he reappears an instant later in an adjacent screen. In the spirit of **Impossible Mission** and the **Prince of Persia** games, the player must explore every aspect of the current screen before continuing to the next screen. The SNES version is slower than its Genesis counterpart; however, a gamer would be hard-pressed to prove that while making a spectacular, running leap across a chasm.

Flashback, a challenging action game, maintains its lasting appeal on the SNES with first rate sound and graphics and strong replayability.

— Laurie Yates

COMPLEXITY	Hard
GRAPHICS	93%
SOUND	89%
PLAYABILITY	91%
REPLAYABILITY	92%

OVERALL 91%

Clay Fighter

IN THE FINAL COMBAT ONLY THE REAL HEROES WERE LEFT STANDING IN THE STREET



If you're looking for real heroes, Clay Fighter pulverizes them all. These outrageous clay characters rule the street. They're the kings of combat. They'll put you in stitches... and those so-called "heroes" in the hospital. Join the Clay Fighters as they punch, kick, fly and stomp their way through the most hilarious adventure ever. But don't be fooled by imitators. Because Clay Fighter stands above them all!



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VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Daffy Duck: The Marvin Missions

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Sunsoft
SNES

THEME	Action
MEGABITS	8
PLAYERS	15
LEVELS	5

From the inky darkness known as space, comes a hero for our time. The confidence of a politician, the stature of a great athlete... the bill of a mallard. Before you can say Ishkabibble, the incomparable Duck Dodgers makes his appearance to rid the galaxy of that celestial fiend known to his friends as Marvin.

Continuing their relationship with Warner Bros., Sunsoft has released yet another game based on the Looney Tunes universe. **Daffy Duck: The Marvin Missions (DDMM)** places everybody's favorite little black bad-duck into one of his most popular roles; Duck Dodgers. Like Sunsoft's **Road Runner** game, **DDMM** the levels of the game actually represent different cartoons, each one offering a unique local.

The levels (or missions) include "Where There's Duck, There's Fire", "20,000 Martians Under the Sea", "Duck Dodgers on Ice", "The Incredible Shrinking Duck", and "The Greatest



There is no telling what is going to attack our favorite space duck.

Show Off Earth." Borrowing many of the themes from the Duck Dodgers cartoons (as well as the other Marvin cartoons) this game is a cartoon joyride!

Some gamers may not be very excited about another side-scrolling platform game. Indeed, there is nothing remarkably unique about **DDMM**. The character runs, jumps, powers-up and winds his way through each level thwarting bad guys at every turn. Unwittingly, this game relies solely on its license to succeed.

Succeed it does. Anyone who has ever wanted to control the action of a Looney Tunes cartoon will be mesmerized with the presentation here. The graphics are large, well animated and completely accurate to the characters. This is especially important since it is the characters which seem to encompass a special kind of magic all their own. After almost 60 years they manage to remain fresh and by no means dated.

The backgrounds are well done but fairly standard. They do have good depth and serve their purpose well. As stated before, the real strength of the graphics are the characters. The movements are precise, right down to Daffy's facial expressions and the way Marvin walks.

The music and sound effects are above average, and the digitized version of *The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down* (the Looney Tunes theme) is sure to get players in to proper mood.

Game play relies mostly on the standard running and jumping and adds a jet-pack just for fun. The jet-pack does need fuel to run, which can be found scattered throughout the levels, as well as for sale at the Acme Weapon Shop.

Weapons are also another important part of the game. Daffy always has his trusty blaster at his side, and through the miracle of cartoon physics, it never runs out of ammunition. However, there are five other guns available at the Acme Weapon Shop to make the going just a little bit easier for our fine feathered friend.

The freeze gun will freeze enemies for a short time, and make them more vulnerable to other forms of attack. The electricity gun sends out a long range bolt of electricity and is particularly useful against enemies overhead. The

three-way gun fires a bullet that breaks into three smaller bullets, offering a wider range than the standard blaster. The bomb gun shoots a timed explosive which rolls on the ground until it explodes. Finally, the anti-matter gun sends out a blast of anti-matter energy that will destroy most enemies quickly. Other items for sale at the Acme store include extra lives, gems (collect five for a continue), fuel for the jet-pack and extra nutty attacks (for a special furious



feather flying attack).

Remember, everything at the store costs money, so it is important that Daffy collects as many money bags as he can find.

All in all, cartoon fans will be the ones to most appreciate **DDMM**. Though this game is far from bad, it does not stand out as spectacular either. There is just something cool about being able to control a character you grew up with, like Daffy Duck.

With any luck, Sunsoft will continue to produce games based on the Looney Tunes characters, and hopefully blend some truly original technique with the wonderful graphics and sounds.

Until then though, I will be more than happy to play **Road Runner: Death Valley Rally**, **Tazmania** and **Daffy Duck: The Marvin Missions**.

— Marc Carron

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	91%
SOUND	88%
PLAYABILITY	84%
REPLAYABILITY	79%

OVERALL 86%

Disney's Aladdin

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Capcom
SNES

THEME	Action
MEGABITS	8
PLAYERS	1
LEVELS	6+

A great deal of attention has been given to Sega's amazing version of **Disney's Aladdin** for the Genesis. Produced in conjunction with Virgin games and the Walt Disney Co., the game is truly outstanding.

One side result of all this attention, is the fact that the Capcom game, coincidentally also titled **Disney's Aladdin** has received little to no attention at all. This is really a pity, since Capcom has had a long and fruitful relationship with Disney, and has continually produced wonderful games which capture the feel of the Disney characters. From their first effort, **Micky Mouscapade** for the NES about six years ago, Capcom has showed that cartoons really can be brought to life.

Capcom's version of **Aladdin** is completely different than the Sega/Virgin version for the genesis, sharing only the theme and title. And while Sega and Virgin were creating their technological masterpiece, Capcom quietly created a game that is worthy of the excellent movie that inspired it. While comparisons are inevitable, they are not entirely fair nor are they necessary. Capcom's version may not hold the same level of animation as was achieved by Disney for the Sega game, but this game certainly is not lacking in any regard, with the possible exception of difficulty. When compared to the field of games released on a day-to-day basis, Capcom's **Aladdin** stands well above the crowd.

Over six fast and furious levels, Capcom's **Aladdin** takes the player on a romp through the world of Aladdin's Agrabah. Though the game does not follow the movie exactly, the basic story remains intact. The gamer takes on the



Watch out! Even Abu can't save you from the guys with the arrows!

role of Aladdin, a poor boy who wants the better things in life. As they say, he is "a diamond in the rough." It is also a story of an evil vicar named Jaffar. It seems that being the royal advisor to the Sultan is not enough for this power hungry miscreant. Instead he is in search of the ultimate power and the Sultan's throne.

Aladdin and Jaffar are brought together when, while searching for the all powerful magic lamp, Jaffar discovers that only Aladdin can enter the mystic Cave of Wonders to retrieve it.

The player must guide Aladdin through many levels of action in search of the lamp and control of the wondrous genie that resides inside. He also must stop the evil Jaffar and win the hand of the beautiful Princess Jasmine. A pretty busy schedule for a common street rat.

The graphics in **Aladdin** are beautiful, each location offering excellent depth and a unique feel. This is particularly true of the Genie's lamp sequence (not found in the movie). Here it is apparent that the programmers decided to go with the surreal rather than the real, and include some special touches like floating Genie heads that change expression when you jump on them.

The animation is also excellent, with all of the characters being well drawn and showing exceptional quality in their movement.

The painted sequences between the levels also look very good, though a little animation would have been nice.

The soundtrack for the game includes many of the songs from the movie, including *Friend Like Me* and *A Whole New World*. Both the music and the sound effects are well done and enhance the game nicely.

Most of all, the game excels through awesome game play. The character moves smoothly and encompasses a lot of different techniques though none of them are terribly difficult to accomplish from a control standpoint.

There is even a flying carpet sequence where Aladdin must escape from the Cave of Wonders by maneuvering above and below the jutting rocks and avoiding the flowing lava. It is a fast-paced sequence that will require some practice.

The only real complaint about this game is the level of difficulty. Capcom is still making their Disney-based games too easy. It is understandable to want to make these game accessible to children, but by not offering a higher level of difficulty, the game becomes a cakewalk for any experienced gamer. While this game will be fun to replay, the ease in which it is beat will cause some to rent the game



Catch the golden scarab and win a chance at the Genie's wheel!

instead of buying it.

The inclusion of a password option is nice but unnecessary in a game this easy.

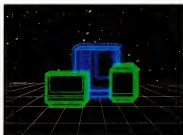
Overall, Capcom's version of **Disney's Aladdin** is a great game which should get a little more recognition.

— Marc Camron

COMPLEXITY	Easy
GRAPHICS	93%
SOUND	91%
PLAYABILITY	94%
REPLAYABILITY	84%

OVERALL 93%





VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Lotus II: R.E.C.S.

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Electronic Arts
Genesis

THEME	Racing
MEGABITS	8
PLAYERS	1-2
LEVELS	3

The road ahead twists like a thrashing snake as competing cars leapfrog into the foreground and disappear to either side. Lightning flashes between a mountainous horizon and lowering clouds. Control isn't easy on wet asphalt at over 200 kilometers an hour, and more than once the red Lotus Esprit Turbo SE goes off the pavement, fighting to return, allowing a couple of the other drivers to get ahead. But not for long, as the player-driver regains control, maintaining pressure on the accelerator. Perhaps they're more cautious... or maybe it's just that the player selected an easy level this time.

Lotus II: R.E.C.S. is for the video racing enthusiast who just wants to have fun, and whose concern is for the action of the race, less for the technical details of the machine being piloted.

Only three production models of the Lotus are offered—the Esprit Turbo SE, a yellow Elan SE and a green M200. Their specifications are indicated with their display in the Selection Mode—top speeds (in MPH), acceleration (0-60), horsepower and torque. No modifications are available, unless you count the manual or automatic shift option.

Modifications may be made in the courses, however. The R.E.C.S. in the title stands for Race Environment Control System, and there are 11 options for track construction that combine to make a virtually unlimited number of possible courses, ranging from tooling around a featureless plain to instant disaster.

Nine of the variables range from 0 percent to 100 percent, allowing changes in how many curves there are on the track, how sharp are the turns, track length, number of hills, their steepness, aggression level of the other drivers, frequency of obstacles (road clutter) and a couple that adjust the background scenery. One variable switches between a linear or loop track, and the 11th, called Scenario, provides 13 different landscapes, including desert, snow, fog, marshland, storm and night driving through the outskirts of a sparkling city. Each has its own effects on the way the Lotus handles.

The levels indicator in the box above is thus a bit misleading. There are three levels of difficulty among the preset courses, but the option to race on one of any number of player-constructed—or randomly generated—tracks moves that range to something over five trillion.

One of the scenarios, called Roadworks, points up the British origin of the design team, Gremlin Graphics, Ltd. It evokes the problem of road construction



delays, evidently common the world over, but the signs and indicators won't be familiar to the American player.

Player-created tracks are not stored after the Genesis is shut off. All tracks are identified by a series of code letters, and the manual urges the player to note these down and save them for later reference. Those using the RECS option will see how these codes are generated.

There are two Game Modes: Timed or Championship. In the Timed game, the player must get through each checkpoint of the course within a set amount of time, or the game ends. In the Championship version, the player accumulates points according to the finishing position, and must finish in the top ten to qualify for the next race.

There are four Sound Options to

accompany the player on the track. The 00 selection is for no music—just the usual engine sounds and the occasional impact upon hitting obstacles and other cars. The rest are musical—frenetically paced with heavy, driving bass to keep the juices and adrenaline flowing.

There are no spectacular crashes or spinouts. The Lotus might as well be indestructible for all the impediments it brushes off as it cruises along. All that happens is that it gets slowed down.

Visually, the vehicles and landscapes and weather conditions are well handled. The viewpoint is pseudo first-person, with the player's Lotus centered at the bottom of the screen, seen from the rear, with a couple of slightly angled aspects during turns. In Two-player Mode, the screen is split horizontally.

Unlike many racing games, there are no track maps. There is a speed indicator (in kilometers per hour), rev bar (useful when using manual shift), gear indicator (1-5), distance bar and score. In Timed play, a digital indicator shows how long the player has to reach the next

checkpoint; in Championship Mode, this shows the position in a field of 20 cars. In the Championship game, there is also a fuel gauge; whenever the Lotus runs low the player may pull over to a pit stop and refill. It is optional; players must judge if they're close enough to the finish to do without the stop.

Images are bitmapped, so scaling occurs in increments, giving the impression that approaching cars and shrubbery are jumping toward the screen. The road ahead is never seen very far, even when the viewpoint seems to be from the top of a hill. The effect is as though the road is being created out of nothing, com-

plete with cars at the appropriate distance ahead. Night, rain and fog scenarios obscure this anomaly satisfactorily.

Lotus II is essentially non-violent; it's for the video racer whose aggressive instincts are assuaged by speed, by passing the competition on the road and outdoing his or her own scores.

Go ahead, put the pedal to the metal (i.e., thumb to B button) and go!

— Ross Chamberlain

COMPLEXITY	Simple
GRAPHICS	90%
SOUND	84%
PLAYABILITY	84%
REPLAYABILITY	85%

OVERALL 86%

Sega™ 6-Button Controllers.

If this were a perfect world you'd be all thumbs. That way you'd have more moves, you'd have more control, you'd have more intense combinations. But things aren't perfect. So if you want all that stuff you should either buy one of our new arcade style



The Next Best Thing To Genetic Mutation.

6-Button controllers or start handling large amounts of nuclear waste and—well, hope for the best. Personally, we'd go for the controllers. They're more reasonably priced and a heck of a lot easier to come by than a chunk of plutonium.

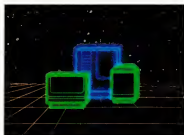


6-button arcade pad™



6-button arcade stick™





VIDEO GAME GALLERY

NBA Jam

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Arena
Genesis

THEME	Sports
MEGABITS	N/A
PLAYERS	1-4
LEVELS	N/A

It's going to be a little difficult for readers who haven't played the hit Midway coin-op to appreciate the elements that make **NBA Jam** so unique among sports games.

Imagine—if you will—a scrolling, angled side-perspective roundball sim interbed with a street fighting game. No, Moses Malone and Patrick Ewing don't throw Divine Wind Bicycle Kicks at one another in the key; it's simply that this action-oriented b-ball game definitely par-takes of the street fighting sensibility, with its player attributes, turbo moves and semi-magical superdunks.

NBA Jam is a two-on-two game which can be played in a variety of formats. The Head-to-Head Mode allows two players, or a human player and the computer, to each control one member of a two-man squad. The Team Game allows a pair of human players to cooperate against a team piloted by two other humans, the

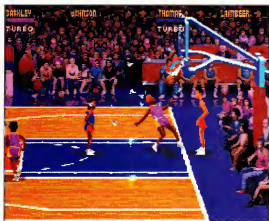
computer, or a player and the computer. Any team being operated by only one player can be joined in progress by another human player at any time. Four players obviously require the 4-way Genesis adapter. The Options Screen, meanwhile, provides players with an admirable level of flexibility and control over playing time and difficulty settings.

The two-on-two format may not work for basketball diehards, but as an action game concept, it sizzles. The basketball players come in sets (Barkley/Johnson, for example) and are selected from among 27 NBA teams. Gamers control the on-screen athletes via the controller's three command buttons and the direction pad. When in possession of the ball, the A button passes, the C button shoots, and the B button invokes Turbo, which allows players to move at much faster speeds for a limited amount of time. Turbo also works on defense, while the A button becomes the steal command and the C button is the shot blocker.

There are plenty of great ideas in this design, including one in which a player who scores three baskets in a row is declared "on fire" and has unlimited Turbo for as long as that status endures (until the other team scores a field goal). But **NBA Jam** is hardly a game choked with rules. Physical contact is virtually unlimited, with goal tending and shot clock violations the only serious parameters.

Still, one should not get the idea that this is an airhead arcade game with no sense of statistical reality. Each NBA player is rated in several skill categories based on actual performance, so that Alonzo Mourning plays, shoots, and runs defense like Alonzo Mourning. Moreover, the on-court players bear a striking resemblance to their real life counterparts.

Iguana (which recently scored with Sunsoft's **Aero the Acro•Bat**) did a fantastic job of bringing the arcade graphics and play value to the Genesis version of **NBA Jam**. The



play-by-play is phenomenal, really amping up the excitement level, and the special glowing graphics when a player is enjoying a high-flying slammer ignite the action in a way that no other basketball video game ever has. In addition to the arcade-based features, the home version offers record-keeping (including two-player team records), player switching, seasonal play, and even a halftime report.



Perform high-flying, death-defying dunks and other amazing plays in NBA Jam.

For non-purists, **NBA Jam** is the hottest, most entertaining basketball game available on any platform. So get ready for those tomahawk dunks, 360 rimrockers, and gorilla slams; the NBA is on the Genesis, and the NBA definitely Jams!

Boom shacka-lacka.

— Bill Kunkel



COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	94%
SOUND	93%
PLAYABILITY	98%
REPLAYABILITY	99%

OVERALL 97%

Ranma 1/2: Hard Battle

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

DTMC
SNES

THEME	Fighting
MEGABITS	12
PLAYERS	1-2
LEVELS	N/A

What a wild and crazy original! Ranma Saotome, the star of **Ranma 1/2: Hard Battle** from DTMC, is a contemporary 16-year-old male with considerable skill in the martial arts. In order to polish his fighting skills, his father, Genma, took him to the Training Ground of the Accursed Springs, a natural obstacle course with strategically placed bamboo rods to leap and balance upon. A network of supernatural springs runs through the grounds, winding around the bamboo rods. Each of these springs boasts its own special curse which causes anyone who makes contact with the water to take on the form of the animal or person haunting that spring, whenever they are splashed with cold water. A warm bath reverses the transformation.



Genma is knocked in first, and emerges as a giant panda. Ranma, meanwhile, tumbles into a different spring, and is transformed into a red-haired female (!) named Ranma-chan. The twosome eventually return to Japan, and visit the Tendo Martial Arts School, where Ranma meets his betrothed, Akane, a tomboy with superb martial arts skill. Ryoga, Ranma's primary rival, followed the Saotomes to the Accursed Springs and was transformed into a black pig, who is subsequently adopted by Akane. Shampoo (don't you just love these names?) comes to the school from China. She is seeking vengeance against Ranma-chan, but falls in love with Ranma. Still with us?

The game revolves around an interesting educational theory: the principal of the school, the ultimate controller of the students' destinies, is an unscrupulous schemer who makes deals with the students and other Japanese citizens. Ranma, for example, is given the chance to skip his final exams if he can triumph in a series of one-on-one street fights. The principal, however, is not known for keeping his promises.

There are 12 characters in **Ranma**, each with his or her own agenda and reason for fighting. While Ranma wants a pass on his exams, Ranma-chan Saotome wants the curse removed. Ryoga Hibiki, an amnesiac wanderer, is tricked into fighting former friends, while Shampoo is looking for love. Akane Tendo wants to see stricter discipline enforced so the boys will stop teasing her for dates, Genma Saotome is striving for ultimate strength, and Hikaru Gosunkugi, with his principal's assistance, wants to use "directional polarity" to attract Akane. Beyond the students, the principal has also struck deals with several citizens: Ukkyo Kuonji wants to expand her business interests; Mousse, a magician, craves personal fulfillment; the Bakuchioh King plans to open a casino, and is practicing both his card dealing and foul play, while Pantyhose Taro needs to locate his mischievous elderly martial arts master in order to get a new name (does he ever!). Taro also went wading in the cursed springs and transforms into a single entity comprising a bull, duck, snake and yeti.

There are three modes of play available in **Ranma 1/2**. One-Player Tournament Mode permits the player to choose one of 10 combatants, who then challenges the remaining characters. One interesting note is that Ranma does not fight Ranma-chan in this mode. Two-Player Competition allows both gamers to choose characters to fight one another. In this scenario, characters can battle mirror images. Finally, the Team Challenge Mode has both players selecting five characters each from the dozen available fighters. Each character is matched with a fighter from the opposing side, and the team with the most winning characters triumphs.

The character graphics are rendered in classic Japanimation style, while the backgrounds are refreshingly simple and keep the fighters clearly visible, unlike

Why Ranma?

Ranma is a megahit with Japanese teens, comparable to the popularity of the *Simpsons* in America. **Ranma 1/2** is actually the second **Ranma** cart. The first, released in 1992 for the NES, was simply called **Street Combat**, and, eventually, had the **Ranma** story removed. The third game, which is currently available only in Japan, is more of an adventure, with Ranma and his friends journeying to China in order to locate someone to remove the curse of the pools. While the comic books and video tapes are available in the U.S., it is doubtful that the videos will ever make Saturday morning television shows, as there is occasional female nudity when Ranma changes to Ranma-chan.

many fighting games in which the overly-complex backgrounds clash with the sprites. The animation of both the defeated and victorious characters is charmingly presented. For example, watching Akane flash the "V-for-Victory" symbol and wink, while Hikaru Gosunkugi kisses the ground at her feet, is much more satisfying than watching the loser simply flutter to earth and lay there, inert. The soundtrack, meanwhile, is pleasant, but not spectacular, and the heavily Americanized speech is a cloying turn-off.

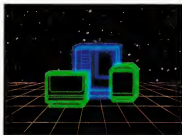
As a fighting game, **Ranma** meets the standards of its predecessors. It is a challenging game that features the traditional moves including a variety of blocks, jumps, kicks and punches. Each player has expert techniques which are invoked through combination commands. The replayability is enhanced by the team play feature, where skilled gamers can test their mastery of moves and durability.

Ranma 1/2 (so called because he is Ranma only half the time) is a solid fighting game that is considerably enlivened by the goofy charm of its characters and situations.

— Laurie Yates

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	87%
SOUND	79%
PLAYABILITY	85%
REPLAYABILITY	87%

OVERALL 86%



VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Obitus

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Bullet-Proof Software
SNES

THEME Fantasy RPG
MEGABITS 8
PLAYERS 1
LEVELS 13

The shortage of RPGs for 16-Bit video game systems is one of the most alarming trends in today's software market. Whereas in its prime, the NES boasted an impressive array of strategy, role-playing, sports and action titles, only the latter two categories seem to have any steam on the Genesis and SNES. In such a limited universe, a solid, if unspectacular RPG such as **Obitus** should be welcomed with open arms.

For starters, the player-character isn't chasing after a kidnapped princess this time around; in fact, the plot has some truly intriguing undertones. We are told that Old King Cullen (who later opened a chain of supermarkets here in the U.S.) and his Queen Genieveve ruled the ominously-named land of **Obitus** for many years, employing the four magical Gems of Tranquility to keep things cool. It's only on his deathbed that the King and

other inquiring minds learn the shocking truth: Genieveve was kidnapped and replaced by a sorcerous doppelganger named Salome years earlier. This creates a problem, since Salome turns out to have also mothered all four of Cullen's sons and heirs. In order to keep his tainted scions from using the Gems for nefarious purposes, the King grants one to each of them and then croaks, knowing they'll feud endlessly amongst themselves over possession of the quartet. The player is cast as an apparently ordinary citizen who is sent on the daunting quest to retrieve and reunite all four Gems in the Tower of Obitus.



Not all characters are out to ruin you. Listen carefully to those who speak.

Obitus employs an unusual movement system; as the p-c travels through the game's incredible variety of mazes, he moves through long stretches of tunnel connected by a series of octagonal way stations, like Tinker Toy assemblies. At each of these eight-sided stations, an on-screen direction indicator displays anywhere from one to eight tunnels which can be accessed from that point (though most stations offer no more than two or three access points). Once p-cs enter one of these tunnels, they can only move forward or backward until they reach the next station.

Visually, the game is presented primarily in first-person, dungeon-crawl perspective, with a couple of side-view scenes tossed in for good measure.

Although there was a Talk command in the computer version, this edition doesn't feature a lot of chit-chat. Any human or animal encountered in the mazes is presumed to be hostile, and several

Obitus: the Origin

Obitus was originally released in Great Britain by developer/publisher Psygnosis for the Amiga, Atari ST, and PC in 1990. The best of the three was the Amiga edition, which featured a slightly different screen configuration from the SNES version. The main display screen occupied the top three-quarters of the screen, as does the SNES version (albeit with considerable framing). The bottom quarter of the Amiga version, however, featured an on-screen interface comprising nine command buttons, including Eat, Talk, Sleep, Pick Up, Drop, Pause, etc.; a direction finder; inventory display window; and a gem-like disk prompt.

The SNES edition has streamlined the on-screen interface considerably, while maintaining most of the play elements from the original. The horizontal strip at the bottom of the SNES **Obitus** features only four items: Stamina and Health gauges (represented by burning candles), direction finder, and inventory display.

characters appear simply as game devices, letting the player know that they shouldn't leave a level yet, or blocking access to some crucial location.

Obitus is a good value in RPG terms; there's plenty to do and lots of territory to cover, though the graphics are a little too static within each level, creating a sense of visual boredom. Otherwise, the interface has been simplified, and the click-on commands from the computer version have been assigned to one of the SNES's many action buttons. The interesting story line and unusual construction should keep most players interested well into the learning curve, and Bullet-Proof thoughtfully enclosed maps of the first seven levels for neophytes. **Obitus** certainly isn't the most innovative game on the block, but it has enough originality and offers sufficient challenge to make it a worthwhile addition to most SNES libraries.

— Bill Kunkel

COMPLEXITY	Intricate
GRAPHICS	86%
SOUND	76%
PLAYABILITY	88%
REPLAYABILITY	74%

OVERALL 86%



Cao Cao

Nobunaga

Genghis Khan

It took 1400 years,
but we finally
got them together!

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Romance II
of The Three Kingdoms
DRAGON OF DESTINY



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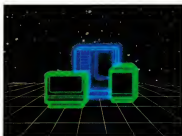
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VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Romance of the Three Kingdoms III

PUBLISHER SYSTEM Koei SNES

THEME	Strategy
MEGABITS	12
PLAYERS	1-8
LEVELS	N/A

Games like this are the answer to a wargamer's prayer. Armchair generals constantly scout for novel strategic situations, but few wish new ones for designers to simulate.

One answer is to move beyond the much-trampled battlefields of World War II, the Napoleonic campaigns and the American Civil War. Koei's **Romance of the Three Kingdoms** series draws on the rich history of China. The latest title has six scenarios set in 2nd and 3rd century China after the fall of the Han Dynasty.

Subtitled "Dragon of Destiny," this solitary or multiplayer contest simulates the military, diplomatic and economic conditions surrounding the struggle to possess the dragon throne. Up to eight can participate, yet strong artificial intelligence makes **Romance III** a good choice for solo sessions, too. The save/restore



feature lets the user play this fairly long game at a relaxed pace, a definite aid to enjoying this multi-layered simulation.

Don't be fooled by the large game-scale; **Romance III** is far from shallow. Reading the rulebook is highly recommended. It wouldn't hurt to keep the docs close to the SNES during the first game or two, either. Every phase of the turn has an accompanying on-screen prompt, but would-be emperors could easily overlook some options until they become familiar with the flow of the game.



Players can choose from a long line of ancient warriors to start the scenario.

The player is a Ruler, a pretender to the throne, who dispatches subordinates to do his bidding. There are 18 Rulers provided on the cartridge, and a Character Construction mode allows the video gamer to build a customized character.

Officers are non-player characters who can execute a Ruler's commands. The Ruler encounters unaffiliated officers during a scenario and may induce them to join his retinue.

Every character has attributes, summarized on a data screen, such as age, loyalty, number of soldiers and years in service to the ruler. Each character is rated for intellect, political ability, war ability, charm and stamina.

Romance III is highly challenging and has an intricate command structure. The menus which allow the player to issue monthly civil and military orders are logical and easy to work. Highlight the choice with the pad and confirm with the A



button. Most choices lead to sub-menus, so the game doesn't confront players with too many alternatives at any one point, though **Romance III** certainly doesn't skimp on scope.

Wargames aren't noted for superb graphics, so **Romance III**'s colorful, atmospheric visuals are a pleasant surprise. The battle sequences, shown in modified overhead perspective, are an unexpected plus.

The sound and music are decent, if not inspirational. If the audio gets tiresome, it can be turned off.



Mid-battle statistics are compiled and displayed to enhance tactical combat.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms III is truly an uncommon title, even in this period of diversity. It shows that video gaming is more than just shooters and scrollers. It's not for everyone, but brain-gamers should love it.

- Arnie Katz

COMPLEXITY	Intricate
GRAPHICS	85%
SOUND	84%
PLAYABILITY	90%
REPLAYABILITY	95%

OVERALL 88%

Pele Soccer

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Accolade
Genesis

THEME	Sports
MEGABITS	12
PLAYERS	1-2
LEVELS	N/A

The development house responsible for this fascinating action sports contest, Radical Entertainment, has produced a highly playable soccer simulation without sacrificing playability. That's important to American gamers, who aren't familiar with the strategies of the world's most popular sport.



Pelé offers soccer fans all the realism of the actual game, including goal kicks.

The angled overhead perspective playfield and finely detailed animated booters give **Pele Soccer** strong visual impact. Coaches can customize team uniforms prior to the start of play, and the image bank even gives each squad's goal keeper a special identifying shirt. More importantly, the on-screen athletes are large enough to make such choices significant. The outfits are more than just splashes of color in **Pele Soccer**.



The main display shows the seesaw action in extreme close-up. You don't get an overall view of the field, but the responsive scrolling of the diagonally oriented pitch keeps the screen centered on the ball. Still, a schematic map of the entire field tucked into a corner wouldn't have hurt.

Pele Soccer follows the current trend by incorporating full-motion video clips into the animated action. The photographic sequences, shown in color in pop-up windows, are attractive in themselves, but they don't blend well with the pure animated interaction portions of the design.

One or two coaches can play an exhibition, participate in a tournament or conduct a 40-game league season. The length of a half can be set at any five-minute increment between 5:00 and 45:00.

A world map facilitates selection of one of the game's 40 international teams. When the coach clicks on a flag, the C button brings up the club's offense, defense and aggression ratings.

Statistics play an important role in **Pele Soccer**, but this is definitely an action simulation. The numbers represent a full season of play for each booter in the Exhibition mode, but they are accumulated from actual game performance for tournaments and leagues.

Coaches may change basic player ratings, if desired, but only for exhibition matches. It's a good way to give a weaker participant in two-player matches some extra help.

The coach also picks a basic formation before the game. A team can switch to a different setup between halves or during a time out, called with the Star button. We who don't know

soccer as well as baseball or football will appreciate the way the formation selection screen explains the pros and cons of each possibility. It's a small thing, but it really makes the video gamer make meaningful strategic decisions.

The action seems very realistic due to superior artificial intelligence for non-controlled booters.



When a player passes the ball, in response to the B button, the intended recipient automatically moves toward the ball to complete the maneuver.

The control system is well-explained in the documentation and a snap to master. Practice gives coaches a chance to learn the art of goal keeping and perfect shooting accuracy. It's also a good way to learn the trickier moves, like heading a ball in the air or Pele's famous bicycle kick.



Illegal fouls are whistled by the ref, and the offending player's name is shown.

Pele Soccer is one of several 16-Bit cartridges which hope to cash in on this year's World Cup excitement. Accolade's entry has the fleet-footed action, strategic depth, and strong visuals to overcome Americans' traditional resistance to this sport.

— Amie Katz

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	91%
SOUND	83%
PLAYABILITY	93%
REPLAYABILITY	97%

OVERALL 91%



VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Goofy's Hysterical History Tour

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Absolute
Genesis

THEME	Action
MEGABITS	8
PLAYERS	1
LEVELS	14

Gawrsh! After being overlooked for years as a video game star, Goofy—Dippy Dawg to his friends—is now starring in two games: **Goof Troop** (Capcom/SNES) and Absolute's new side-scroller, **Goofy's Hysterical History Tour**.

Goofy is cast as the janitor of the Ludwig von Drake History Museum, where his good-natured bumbling has kept things in a general state of chaos. The Professor warns Goofy that this is his last chance and if anything goes wrong with the debut of four exhibits, he's out. Fortunately, Goofy has a new invention, the Extend-O-Hand, with tons of attachments designed to make his custodial duties easier. Impressed, the Professor decides that if Goofy can get the job done, he'll not only keep his job, but be promoted to head janitor. None of this sits well with fellow janitor, Pete, Goofy's longtime rival, who has been busily informing on our hero at every opportunity. He decides to move headgear from the new exhibits around so that they are in the wrong time periods; thus, the Professor will presume that Goofy goofed and fire him.

Goofy's cleaning routine takes him through four main museum exhibits: Pre-historic, Medieval, Colonial America and the Wild West. As he cleans each of the exhibits, he begins daydreaming about what life would have been like if he had lived way back then. Only by working his way through the world can he challenge the level boss, who is one of Pete's distant, but just as rotten, relatives.

The Prehistoric Exhibit pits Goofy against Caveman Pete, Pete's ancestor. Before reaching that point, however, Goofy must wander through the oversized Primeval Forest. The Medieval Exhibit forces Goofy to storm the castle of Sir Pete the Rotten-Hearted; the Colonial America exhibit has Goofy scouring the rooftops and facing Peg-leg Pete on his pirate ship; and the Wild West exhibit places Goofy in the desert, avoiding cacti and Gunslinger Pete's wagon train.

Goofy is not empty handed in this endeavor. The Extend-O-Hand is handy on its own, but its variety of attachments make it downright indispensable. The basic white glove can be used in a variety of ways: against Goofy's enemies; snatching yellow Goof Cubes; and triggering Gooftraptions. Extend-O-Hand attachments include a boxing glove that enhances Goofy's punching power; the boot extends his jumping ability; the propeller lets Goofy get airborne; and the Goofball glove throws Goofballs at his enemies.

Goof Cubes are yellow or blue boxes that help Goofy in his quest. The yellow cubes give Goofy access to hard-to-reach screen areas while the blue ones serve as multi-purpose bonus objects.

There are six different Gooftraptions in the game, five of which can be used to



eliminate enemies. The Birdhouse releases a pair of birds who carry off one enemy each. The Factory Whistle tricks enemies into thinking it's quitting time, so they stop what they're doing and give Goofy the chance to either get away or knock them out with the Extend-O-Hand. The Cuckoo Clock releases a bowling ball which knocks away any bad guys it touches, and when the Fireworks explode, Goofy is surrounded by a shower of sparks, which eliminate any bad guy they touch. The Goofball Popper chums out two fresh Goofballs that take out any

Dan Kitchen

Executive Vice-President of
Creative Development

"When we [Absolute] began the relationship with Disney, we saw there was a missing character, Goofy. Because of the name and the character being Goofy, Walt's third major character, we knew it could make a great video game property.

"We went through Disney's archives and reviewed a lot of the old Goofy comic books. Their themes were generally based on time [travel] with Goofy placed in time oriented situations.

"While we didn't want to send Goofy back in time, per se, we had to determine a position he could hold where he could access different time periods. When Disney enabled us to use Ludwig von Drake, we thought he would be funny as a museum curator, allowing us to tie Goofy into different time periods through the different exhibits."

enemies they collide with, and the Goofball Funnel stores the Goofballs for bonus points.

The vividly animated graphics clearly show the influence of former Disney animator, Milt Neil. The foreground animation of Goofy, his enemies and the obstacles were all hand-drawn, scanned, and then colorized to produce the best Disney quality animation. The music, while simple, perfectly complements the subject matter, as do the appropriately cartoon-like sound effects.

The playability is very high, despite the fact that it takes a while to master the Extend-O-Hand. The learning curve is also well plotted; as the player improves, the game adjusts its difficulty to present more of a challenge.

Goofy's Hysterical History Tour shows that, as a video game star, Goofy is right up there with the other members of the Disney pantheon.

— Laurie Yates

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	91%
SOUND	86%
PLAYABILITY	89%
REPLAYABILITY	84%

OVERALL 88%

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SOFTWARE GALLERY



Shadowcaster

PUBLISHER
DESIGNER

Origin
Raven Software

PLATFORM	MS-DOS
THEME	Adventure
MIN. HD. REQ.	16 MB
PLAYERS	1

Shadowcaster is a fairly standard, fairly straightforward adventure game: wander around, find things, kill enemies. What makes it unusual is the abilities built into the title character: he is a metamorph whose morphing abilities are innate but subconscious. He requires a "trigger" (in the form of a power obelisk) in order to gain the ability to morph into another form. Consider it a form of amnesia.

Kirt, the title character, has a total of seven different forms. Each form has certain special abilities. His base form is human; he must always morph from human into another form, and vice versa. Special abilities of this form are high jumping and a strong karate kick. His Maorin form is a massive catlike creature with four arms. This form has incredible strength and very sharp claws, but must avoid liquid religiously. Infrared vision allows the Maorin to see in the dark and locate hidden traps. The Caun form is a short, elfin one. The Caun

heals ten times faster than the human form, but has the smallest number of hit points. Special abilities of the Caun include sneaking, create light, insect swarm and distant grab. The Caun can squeeze through much tighter spaces than any of the other forms. The fourth form is that of the Opsis, a sort of floating eyeball with tentacles. While slow, it can fly and has one of the most powerful special attacks in the game. Using the death blast will likely kill most mortal opponents.

Other abilities are fireball, cold blast, slow time (an excellent escape tool) and



Adventurers can expect wild battles with a variety of evil monsters to kill.

mortal terror. The Opsis is extremely resistant to magic. The Kahpa form is the only form that can swim underwater.

It can withstand about the same amount of abuse as the human form, but its magical abilities are fearsome when used underwater. These abilities are electrical shock and sonic attack. This form moves faster underwater than anywhere else. Ssair is the name given to the flying dragon form. Its tail and claw attacks are fast and brutal, and its special attack takes the form of fire-



Morph into various forms as you try to find your way through the vast levels.

balls. This form moves faster than any other creature, but must fly everywhere. The Ssair form is stronger than every form but the Grost. The Grost form is a stone giant, nearly immune to physical attack. His damage is twice that of the Ssair, and his resistance to magic is higher than any other form. In exchange for all of this armor, he pays the price in speed. He is slower than any form but the Opsis. His special attacks are feared by all: his earthquake has a radial effect incurring up to 96 points of damage to creatures in his immediate vicinity; paralysis immobilizes most opponents with resistances lower than 20 points.

The Shadowcaster game has over 25 levels and takes approximately 30 hours to complete. The music is quite exceptional, and the sound will overload your auditory protuberances. Be forewarned, though: this game is not easy on system resources. You'll need at least a 386DX-33 (486 recommended) with four megs of RAM. DOS 5.0 (or better) is also required.

—Caseus Mustefa



COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	98%
SOUND	97%
PLAYABILITY	97%
REPLAYABILITY	79%

OVERALL 93%

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SOFTWARE GALLERY

Super VGA Harrier

PUBLISHER Domark/Spectrum Hologbyte
DESIGNER Tomkins, West, Tubbs

PLATFORM	MS-DOS
THEME	Simulation
MIN. HD REQ.	5.7 MEG
PLAYERS	1

"Hey, that thing's taking off by going straight up!" This wouldn't be much of a comment if you were watching a helicopter, but a jet airplane? The Harrier Jump Jet has been a great success since its introduction, and it is now available for missions on your own PC. **Super-VGA Harrier** is a surprisingly fluid flight simulator with realistic flight simulation equations. At the same time, the game succeeds as a strategy simulation of a combined ground-and-air invasion of Indonesia's East Timor Island. Most combined flight simulations and strategy games have failed dismally, but the way Simis combined the two types of games into one makes **Harrier** a great game that is lots of fun to play.

The naval task force of Marines, helicopters, and Harrier jets is helping the East Timor rebels retake their government from a dictatorial military government notorious for human rights violations. The strategy game allows the player to make amphibious and



Get up-close and personal with your enemies as you soar through the sky.

helicopter troop landings, and helicopter or Harrier attacks. It has the dual role of a strike mission planner, setting missions automatically or manually to keep up a continuous barrage of Harrier assaults. Up to eight waypoints can be set from the mission planner for four simultaneous Harrier missions.

The Harrier has no afterburner and cannot go supersonic to avoid interception or surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). The great advantage of the Harrier is the ability to rotate its jet nozzles, allowing it to hover, land and take-off vertically, as a helicopter does (short or vertical take off and landing, or S/VTOL), and turn tighter than an F-16 (vectoring in forward flight or VIFF).

The Harrier, with its S/VTOL ability, is perfect for carrier landings and take offs, which are easily automated. It can carry a heavy payload of arms, including the HARM anti-radar missile, Maverick, AIM-9M, dumb and laser guided bombs, plus

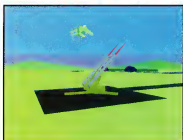


The Super VGA graphics enhance the game play with outstanding realism.

others. The Harrier bomb delivery is via CCIP and automatic, which will not allow bombs to drop unless they will hit the target. The Harrier can hover, stop out of the range of ground installations, fire missiles from the hovering position and return to the ship.

The poor artificial intelligence of opponents makes air combat far too easy, unless five or six opponents are present and there are no more sidewinders. One easy but important mission involves the interception of C-130s bringing in troops and supplies to reinforce the enemy positions. The elimination of radar with HARM missiles early in the game will cut down on the lethal SAMs that pose the only threat in the game.

All of the strategic operations are controlled from the control room of the Tarawa carrier fleet command center. The computer screens keep the pilot informed of events on the map and supplies in the hold, while the map in the



Anti-aircraft weapons such as powerful SAM missile batteries will fire at you.

center of the display can be used to set waypoints for ground and air attacks for the entire fleet. The zoomable map gives detail on where the action is and the progress of the allies and enemy troops. Phones and other icons control the saving and loading of games and going to the pilot's briefing room and other ship locations.

The briefing room provides unique access to any Harrier cockpit on the way to a mission by selecting a mission from the left hand screen icon. Once the mission has been completed, the pilot can jump back to the Tarawa command center to plan another mission, or to check the location of the inflight Harriers that are available from the briefing room. This system works and makes the game a unique and challenging experience.

Operation Saber, an excellent, pre-programmed strategic attack on Timor Island, is the only assault and theatre of operation supported by the game, with no plans for scenario disks, which limits replayability. Situational awareness causes the most problems for the pilot, since the cockpit views, the instruments and AWACS do not keep the pilot adequately informed of the locations and nature of the threats, when compared to the tracking angle indicators on other flight sims. The lack of a game VCR utility makes analysis of flight sim battles difficult.

Super-VGA Harrier, with its excellent graphics and average sound, does not have many standard features, but still has the elusive chemistry necessary to make this strategy and flight combat mix a winning combination.

— Al Gioventi

COMPLEXITY	Intricate
GRAPHICS	88%
SOUND	83%
PLAYABILITY	95%
REPLAYABILITY	75%

OVERALL 86%

The Shadow of Yserbius

PUBLISHER
DESIGNER

Sierra
Joe Ybarra

PLATFORM MS-DOS
THEME RPG Adventure
MIN. HD REQ. 15.2 MEG
PLAYERS 1 - Thousands

Out over ImagiNation Network's (INN) digital highway, the scream of thousands of adventurers and the clash of their weapons can be heard in the void of cyberspace. Over one-half of the usage of INN is devoted to playing the over-a-year-old Joseph Ybarra classic. It was only logical that Sierra and Joe Ybarra, who developed *Bard's Tale*, would want to make an off-line version for those who like to adventure alone in the confines of their home, or for those who want to move their character from the off-line arena to the on-line one.

The Shadow of Yserbius boxed game is actually five games in one, including the on-line and off-line versions of *Yserbius*, the on-line and off-line versions of the *Fates of Twinion*, the sequel to *Yserbius*, just introduced by Sierra on the ImagiNation Network, and a copy of the version 2.2 ImagiNation Network access software.

Characters can be transferred between the off-line and on-line versions of the same game until they attain level 20, after which the characters are not permitted to transfer back to the on-line games. Characters cannot be transferred between *Yserbius* and *Twinion*.

Interview with Scott Amos, Designer

Twinion designer and project leader Scott Amos said, "We introduced no-map zones to *Twinion* to let players experience manual mapping. The small, no-map areas are hard but not torturous and use wall plaques for orientation. At first the beta testers thought the no-map areas were automapping bugs, and complained manual mapping was too difficult when told the truth. When they finished the area, they were adamant that the no-map areas enhanced the game and should not be removed." Scott wishes that he could enjoy the games he designs, but one project is quickly followed by another, with no time to enjoy features like the no-map zones.

Yserbius
Fantasy Adventure
has been running successfully for the on-line crowd for over a year. First-person perspective, turn-based combat, paper-doll like inventory, interesting mazes and quests, eight-player character races, and six guild professions with 32,000 levels dominate the game and contribute to its success.

The game starts in the gallery, where one of a bank of five existing characters may be selected. Characters may also be customized through an easy character generation system. First, the appearance of the character is selected from face and costume parts, then extra points can be assigned to 24 spells and up to 24 profession-specific skills.

Characters enter the volcano dungeon from the "top" entrance in both games, leading to the top of the 34-level, 3-D studio rendered maze which winds deep into the mountain. The bottom entrances in both games take the player back to where s/he teleported out of the volcano earlier to restore health and mana points. Killing monsters in the dungeon gives experience which results in increasing character levels, healing health points, and restoring mana expended by throwing spells. While outside the Volcano the characters can enter the Guild Hall to purchase and sell artifacts, and allocate new skill and spell points obtained by going up levels.

The inventory only allows for 10 quest items and 10 other item slots for potions and special weapons, in addition to the



The boxed version of the game actually has five games for limitless adventure.



seven slots for worn armor and equipped weapons, making repeated trips in and out of the dungeon to sell off artifacts as necessary. Quest items cannot be inadvertently sold to the guild, and usually disappear when used. The large maze (over 40 quests) seems to motivate players to explore every nook and cranny in this never-ending game that defies boredom after hundreds of hours of play. Communication with volcano inhabitants gives clues to the various quests, while others just enjoy killing the monsters, as the excellent automapping system tracks their progress.

Characters are automatically saved upon entering the dungeon and are automatically restored outside the volcano to the most recent save when they die. The on-line game is played with up to four on-line characters per party, as opposed to only one character per off-line party. The on-line game characters can relax after quests in the Tavern to talk over exploits, or communicate with anyone on-line from anywhere in the game.

On-line and off-line *Yserbius* and *Twinion* could be improved by eliminating character transfer limitations among the four games, and increasing the amount of inventory carried. On-line and off-line *Yserbius* and *Twinion* are addicting and entertaining games which will provide many hours of fun for those who play in this complex and challenging arena.

— Al Giovetti

COMPLEXITY	Intricate
GRAPHICS	85%
SOUND	80%
PLAYABILITY	85%
REPLAYABILITY	85%

OVERALL 84%



SOFTWARE GALLERY

Innocent Until Caught

PUBLISHER **Psychosis**
DESIGNER **Nik Wild**

PLATFORM **MS-DOS**
THEME **Adventure**
MIN. HD REQ. **16 MEG**
PLAYERS **1**

Jack T. Ladd is in trouble and not because he is a master thief. Such skills are semi-respectable in the disheveled future portrayed in Psychosis' adventure, **Innocent Until Caught (IUC)**. No, Jack is in trouble for the same thing that has brought down other master criminals throughout history: Income Tax Evasion. The future is no different than the present—everyone must pay.

In the Federation, there is one bureaucracy that oversees such matters, the Interstellar Revenue Decimation Service (IRDS). They know who has been naughty or nice, and they never appear bearing gifts. In a dimly lit interrogation room, the Combat Auditors present Jack with a tax bill that would curl Ross Perot's hair. Further, he is given only 28 days to come up with the cash or he, and all of his descendants, will pay for the crime until the end of time. Stripped of his possessions, Jack is spit back out into the

universe, without a clue as to where he could raise the necessary cash.

The task will involve the completion of numerous smaller quests, each interrelated and building in level of risk and reward. Fortunately, the climate of crime and corruption lends itself to a man of Jack's expertise. Some jobs initially do not appear to lead to financial gain, but the currying of favors from NPCs becomes important at later stages of the game.



The future holds some rather uninviting methods of obtaining information.

IUC's interface is smooth and elegant, accomplishing all necessary adventuring commands via an interchangeable mouse pointer. Right clicking changes the icon and function of the pointer between walk, look, examine, talk, take and use. Left clicking on an object or location on the screen will perform the command that is currently active. Further, regardless of the current icon, when the cursor is passed over an item that can be interacted with, all the possible commands are highlighted on the bottom display. This makes it easy for the player to see what can and cannot be done without wasting time trying unnecessary manipulations and reading innocuous error messages.

Also, when the eyeball icon is active, moving the cursor around the screen will bring up important objects and characters in a window in the lower left corner. This allows players to rapidly scan any new area for items of interest. This should not imply that **IUC**'s puzzles are easy to solve, however, except in the earliest stages of the game, where they serve to indoctrinate the player into the system.

Conversations with

Interview with Nick Wild

"Our goal with **IUC** was to show LucasArts that the British could do it too, and we think we did that rather well. We set out to create a *Bladerunner* or Cyberpunk type atmosphere and a compelling central character, which Jack certainly is. In fact, there is a lot to him that we haven't explored yet, so look for **Innocent II** in about six months. We want him to become as popular as *Leisure Suit Larry* and spawn a whole series of titles. Yes, **Innocent** does contain a degree of sexual innuendo, but we avoided anything explicit to keep our audience as large as possible.

We like the engine in this product very much. We've tried to allow the user the freedom, within each environment anyway, to tackle the puzzles in any order they like. Of course, at some point, they have to be funneled to the main objective, because that's what these types of games are all about. We'll also use this engine in at least two titles besides **Innocent II**. I can't talk about one of them yet, but the other will be called **Victoriana**, and will have a decidedly more cartoonish appearance than **IUC**."

important NPCs are handled via cut screens. Dialogue is portrayed in speech bubbles and Jack has several options to respond to each new line of conversation. Several attitudes are possible for each interaction, but they are inherent in the text and not handled as a separate command function, as is sometimes the case.

Innocent Until Caught contains a lot of humor, despite the rather severe predicament of the protagonist. Though one will seldom laugh out loud, it is impossible to play the game and not appreciate some of the wry sentiment expressed by Jack, who holds a close kinship with Indiana Jones in this respect, and even bears a large resemblance to Harrison Ford.

Don't be innocent, be guilty—get caught playing this game.

— Ed Dille



COMPLEXITY Intricate
GRAPHICS **88%**
SOUND **86%**
PLAYABILITY **92%**
REPLAYABILITY **70%**

OVERALL 87%

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SOFTWARE GALLERY

Quarter Pole

PUBLISHER MicroLeague Interactive
DESIGNER Ken Megill

PLATFORM MS-DOS
THEME Racetrack Simulation
MIN. HD REQ. 10-12 MB
PLAYERS 1-6

It's Race Day at Blue Rock Downs. Suppose Uncle Louie has just died and left the player his racing stable, and the new owner wants to make a go of it. Or maybe the gamer's a millionaire who just flew in from Monte Carlo for a day of



A rustic journey to the exciting world of thoroughbred horseracing is now here!

heavy betting. Or one could be a pony addict taking his or her paycheck to the track. What kind of horse-drawn experience are we looking for?

With **Quarter Pole**, based on the Action Games board game of the same name designed by Arnie Holtzman (who acted as consultant on this version), MicroLeague gives us all the fun of going to the track without the risk of losing money. The player can test a favorite method of betting the ponies, whetting handicapping skills or discover the joys and pitfalls of actually plotting a racing career for a horse or a whole stable.

Before the game begins, the chosen number of players (up to six) are asked

to sign in and choose their individual scenarios. Then the computer "prepares" the racetrack grounds. This takes a very long time unless a really fast computer is being used.

There are two pull-down menus: one "inside" the game, which allows the player to fast-time to another race or day, among other things, and one "outside," which controls such options as adding or removing players, deciding which player is active, and quitting. Everything else is done on the field of play, which is a 3-D eye-level view of Blue Rock Downs.

The player starts at the entrance, and clicks on a destination. For a bettor, the best first stop is at the program window, to buy the day's race program and a "nearly infallible" tip sheet (unless the auto-document function has been turned on, in which case he's likely to get a less-than-courteous response from the guy behind the counter).

After perusing the program (and, if smart, the tip sheet) the player goes to the betting window, where he can bet on a single horse, the Daily Double, an Exacta or a Trifecta. Happily, all of these are explained, along with tips on how to handicap and read the statistics, in a pamphlet included with the game. After collecting a ticket, the player then heads for the grandstand to watch the race.

For the racehorse owner, the game play is a little different. Although also betting on horses, the owner's primary responsibility is his stable. He must



Place your bets and pick up your tip sheet to help you make good choices.



decide which race to put which horse in, and actually plot the career of each of his horses—unless he's lazy, in which case he can leave it up to his trainer. The only problem with that is that if the trainer is no good, the owner could lose everything, so it's a good idea to keep a "hands on" approach.

Except for the initial "call to post" at the beginning of the program, there is no sound in this game—MicroLeague removed it after discovering that it slowed the game play down to a crawl. It's a real shame, because the pace and enjoyment of the game would be greatly improved. The graphics are good, but it would be nice (in the race itself) to have the emphasis more on the horses and less on the background. It's very hard to tell which horse is which, although it isn't necessary—there is a tote board at the bottom of the screen that shows the racers' positions. All game play is done with the mouse, and is both easy and intuitive.

The game is a slow starter, and a lot of people, unless they're horse addicts, may not have the patience to let the game grow on them. But once it gets its legs under it, it can be as addictive as real racing, only you don't have to deal with the huge crowds and often-upset losers cursing their so-called "tips" right in front of your friends or family. Thank goodness it's only computer money!

— Sara Slaymaker

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	75%
SOUND	55%
PLAYABILITY	75%
REPLAYABILITY	85%

OVERALL 78%

Global Domination

PUBLISHER
DESIGNER

Impressions
David Lester

PLATFORM	MS-DOS
THEME	Strategy
MIN. HD REQ.	3 MEG
PLAYERS	1

In the tradition of *Risk*, *Empire*, *Command HQ* and others of the genre, *Global Domination* appeals to the dictator and despot inside everyone. Unlike these products, *Global Domination* allows players to operate at both the strategic and tactical levels. Also, it incorporates diplomacy, espionage, intelligence gathering, special forces operations and a myriad of other features that dwarf competing products. There are almost as many ways to play this game as there are to win it.

To explore these features, let's begin with a standard game and default

Interview with David Lester

"What we wanted to do was take an existing popular game concept like *Risk* and, instead of doing a straight conversion, use the strengths of the computer to build on the original idea. By adding the options we did, we think we have accomplished that goal. Diplomacy isn't much of a factor in the early part of the game but alliances can radically alter the endgame. We also ensured that computer opponents occasionally broke these alliances, just as human players will when the conditions are favorable. One of the big debates we had was whether or not you should be allowed to move an army onto a territory in revolution to quell it. Historically, conventional armies have not done well against organized guerrilla actions. Somalia and Bosnia are a case in point. As a result, territories without garrisons can return to neutrality even late in the game, providing new areas for expansion and complicating the rear guard efforts of the player who previously owned the province. It was also intentional that, if the player wants to ignore the intelligence and special forces options, they can. We don't want to force people into a specific strategy or approach from game to game, believing that the more options that are left open, the longer they will want to play the game."

parameters. This will be played on our world between 2-5 human or computer opponents. A direct modern feature permits head-to-head play but a five-person network is not possible in this version (it is planned). The computer opponents represent a mix of strategic approaches and levels of aggression.

At the low end of the scale is the Caveman, whose limited intelligence precludes him from capitalizing on opportunities, but he can lash out viciously if provoked. Custer is the next weakest and he can be paired with the Caveman for an easy challenge. Queen Victoria, Henry V and Lincoln are solid defensive players with an average drive for expansion. Caesar, Bismarck and Napoleon are strong strategists and worthy opponents, but their lust for new territory is overshadowed by Genghis Khan, the most aggressive opponent.

Each begins with a few territories and no armies. Armies are built using resource points generated by the territories. Armies are composed of different units from infantry to air support, all of which may be designed by the player. Naturally, stronger groups cost more to build, but they also are more capable

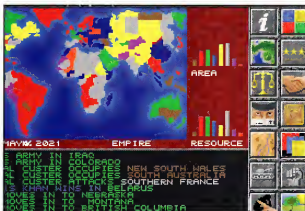
contested areas with stronger pieces over time. It is also possible to designate the engagement as a "satellite" battle, which allows the player to take tactical control on a separate "skirmish" map of the territory. At that level, the



Players must take on many famous opponents from military history.

unit types designed on the army build screens are depicted as distinct fighting pieces. As such, the more diversity the player builds into the armies, the greater the number of tactical options available.

Many other factors contribute to the replay value of the game. Random maps may be generated. Computer opponents behave differently depending on the groupings selected. The level of revolutions in unoccupied territories can be raised or lowered and the skill level increased to Hard or Expert. All of these factors combined



when one enters the tactical phase. A portion of the total resource points must be devoted to transport or fleet categories each turn or the armies cannot move. Optionally, the player can also spend points on intelligence and special forces operations.

Territories are captured by moving armies into them. If already occupied by another player's army, this will generate a battle. At the simple level the battle is resolved instantly. At reduced or full complexity, the battle could continue for several turns. This allows players to withdraw from a losing fight or reinforce

make *Global Domination* one of the most enduring strategy games on the market. Besides, it is kind of fun to watch Napoleon act completely sane while Genghis Khan goes crazy.

— Ed Dille

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	86%
SOUND	88%
PLAYABILITY	96%
REPLAYABILITY	98%
OVERALL 91%	



SOFTWARE GALLERY

Return to Zork

PUBLISHER Activision
PRODUCER Eddie Dombrower

PLATFORM	MS-DOS
THEME	Adventure
MIN. HD REQ.	15 MB
PLAYERS	1

Infocom got its start in the '80s during a time when text adventures were the state-of-the-art and graphics-based games were largely shoot-'em-ups. **Zork** was the fledgling company's initial release. **Zork** (hereafter referred to as **Zork I**) and its two numbered sequels roughly equaled the original **Zork** game that a group of MIT scholars developed on their mainframe in response to the overwhelming popularity of **Adventure**, the first computer adventure.

Over the years, computer technology has advanced and Infocom was disbanded and assumed into the Activision company structure as a brand name. **Return to Zork (RTZ)**, like its big brothers **Beyond Zork** and **Zork Zero**, takes a fresh look at the Zork universe without straying too far from home. The massive project combines the best video, graphics and sound techniques of today's systems with the type of solid storytelling that made the Infocom phrase "interactive fiction" so perfect.

RTZ opens with an introduction in which the text that started **Zork I** appears on the screen. The scene then shifts to a 3-D model of the white house described in that text and does one pass around the house before the action stops at the mailbox. How nostalgic an introduction for fans of the **Zork** games!

This introduction also sets up the events in **RTZ**. In that mailbox, players will see a copy of the invitation they found in the box. The invitation mocks time-sharing agreements with its come-on spiel that lure the addressees to the Valley of the Sparrows.

It is in a mountain pass in the Valley of the Sparrows, now named the Valley of the Vultures, that the game begins. The absence of sparrows in the area is an indication of the changes that have taken place in the Great Underground Empire (GUE). An evil presence has taken over the land and it's up to the player to find out where it is and how to disperse it. The disappearance of whole villages and parts of the landscape point to a greater power. The plot unravels slowly in **RTZ** so that quest fans can enjoy the plot surprises and character revelations. A lot happens in **RTZ**. The events fit together well to form a solid, coherent story.

Players will discover a new interface to go along with the modern special effects and captivating story. The interface goes beyond intuitive so that players of all skill levels should be able to play **RTZ** almost instantly.

The scene is mostly a first-person viewpoint of the current location. As the player moves the cursor around the



screen, it changes to represent possible actions. Arrows represent movements to other locations, while other symbols stand for object manipulation or character conversations. The most unique aspect of the point-and-click control is the way **RTZ** handles objects. When players click on an object either on the screen or in the inventory, a window pops up with animated icons that represent the possible actions with that object. As a player moves the cursor over the icons, text pops up that describes the action. No interface could be more lucid.

RTZ has too many interesting items and interface features to mention in a brief review, but some merit discussion. A camera, tape recorder and map are in the inventory at the beginning of the

game. At any point, players can take a picture of the surroundings. Also, the recorder automatically captures every conversation. Players can use these items to elicit responses from characters and to review past information, as someone truly investigating the events in the game might. The map records the locations players visit so that paper and pencil are unnecessary. These three items and the intelligent interface eliminate any tedium from the game play of this massive adventure. Instead, players can concentrate on the clues and puzzles.

The graphics and sound techniques in **RTZ** elevate the game into the multimedia class of entertainment. Every scene looks like a photograph. The many video clips and actual photos help establish this look. **RTZ** features a large cast of actors and actresses that breathe life into the characters. Many will seem familiar, but no role is more satisfying than that of *The Wonder Years'* Jason Herverly as a troll. Music that reflects the game's events, a large supply of sound effects and many speech segments establish **RTZ** as a game that's as important to hear as it is to watch. The CD-ROM version of **RTZ** takes full advantage of the capabilities of the medium with its myriad special effects and additional speech. If you have an option to choose between the versions, the CD-ROM should win the coin toss. It is as much fun to discover the secrets and solve the puzzles in **RTZ** as it was in the previous **Zork** games. Producer Eddie Dombrower and his design team brought together the fun that epitomized Infocom with their own vision of the GUE.

Challenging puzzles and multiple mazes will entertain any gamer who needs a new adventure, but the Zorkian elements will especially excite Infocom fans. The package even contains a version of the *Encyclopedia Frobozzica*, a guide to the people, places and things of the GUE!

Return to Zork was a long time coming, but it's one journey that Activision should make again and again.

— Russ Ceccola

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	95%
SOUND	95%
PLAYABILITY	90%
REPLAYABILITY	75%

OVERALL 93%

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SOFTWARE GALLERY

The Geekwad Games of the Galaxy

PUBLISHER **Tsunami**
WRITER/DIRECTOR **Paul DePledge**

PLATFORM	MS-DOS
THEME	Arcade
MEMORY	5 MB
PLAYERS	1

The Geekwad returns! The stalwart hero of **Wacky Funsters** makes a much-improved comeback in **The Geekwad Games of the Galaxy**.

King Wacky is being held hostage in a booby-trapped jar of jalapeño jelly on the *Starship Wacky*. The Cybergreek—Geekwad's alter ego fused with a bad sector on his hard drive—intends to usurp the throne. The celeb-happy crew of the *Starship Wacky* includes Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan and Wobbie the Robot. If the player-character successfully answers three trivia questions, these distinguished individuals provide clues which assist in defusing the bomb. Between those clues and the security code, which the gamer learns only after beating the Cybergreek's score on each of the five mini-games, the Geekwad can liberate King Wacky.

The game periods this time around are **Beefender**, **Earth Last!**, **Spaced**



Based on **Frogger**, **Grogger** challenges players to deliver really "fast" food.



Stop space aliens from stealing your precious pounds of steak in **Beefender**.

Solicitors and **Grogger**. **Beefender** pits the player against the attacking Bovine Liberation Organization (BLO) in a respectful send-up of the Williams' classic side-scroller, **Defender**. The gamer must save and protect the grazing cattle before they are rustled and turned into red, charging bulls.

Earth Last!, a gross-out parody of Larry Kaplan's 2600 hit, **Kaboom!** (Activision)—which was, in turn, inspired by an Atari coin-op, **Avalanche**—has aliens passing by Earth, discarding various types of trash, and sometimes actually hurling. As protector of the Earth's ozone layer, it is up to the gamer to catch the galactic garbage as it falls.



Spaced Solicitors gives you an endless supply of quarters to fend off salesmen.

Spaced Solicitors requires the player to defend Granny's front door from marching cookie sellers, paper boys and all-purpose salesmen. In **Space Invader** tradition, vehicles appear in vertical columns across the screen, demanding to be obliterated by a horizontally mobile cannon at the base of the playfield. Obviously, these aliens appreciate the finer things in Earth life—the player's guns fire money!

Grogger is set in a restaurant that hires carhops to serve food. In order to deliver the take-outs, however, the "hop not only must tote the food to the correct bay, but must avoid a plethora of moving

Guide to the Geekwad Gamer

Bob Heitman, VP Product Development for Tsunami, informs **EG** that the prospect for future games in the **Geekwad** series is dim. One-half of the creative team, Paul DePledge, formerly an aspiring stand-up comic as well as a game designer, has entered a seminary in Fresno. Thus, in the tradition of retiring a player's number when they hang it up, Tsunami may retire the **Geekwad** series. With Paul's humor absent from Tsunami, the development team is looking at a new set of games which fit in with the **Geekwad** formula; however, they need a creative spark because they don't want to be a factory, turning out an endless string of uninspired game goofs.

Regarding Paul's turn from comic to cleric, Heitman said: "If it's a joke, we're still waiting for the punch line."

obstacles. Sound familiar? That's right; it's a witty retooling of the early 80s **Gremlin/Sega** megahit, **Frogger**.

The most ambitious of the **Geekwad** games is **Piegnings**. Despite an obvious bow in the direction of Psygnosis' phenomenal **Lemmings** games, this is The **Geekwad** Development Team's attempt to do an essentially original game, with inspiration taken from everything from astronauts playing golf on the moon to old coin-op classics like Atari's **Joust**. The experiment is surprisingly successful, creating an entertainment neo-classic with surprising playability.

Geekwad is just as funny as **Wacky Funsters**, but the games themselves represent a major leap forward; actually playable beyond two minutes of novelty value. And because the designers look to the old, play-again heavy games of a dozen years ago for their inspiration, these more thoughtfully constructed contests may well outlive their status as pastiches and parodies and stand on their own as strong games without platform, bosses or fatality moves.

— Laurie Yates

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	88%
SOUND	86%
PLAYABILITY	85%
REPLAYABILITY	87%

OVERALL 86%

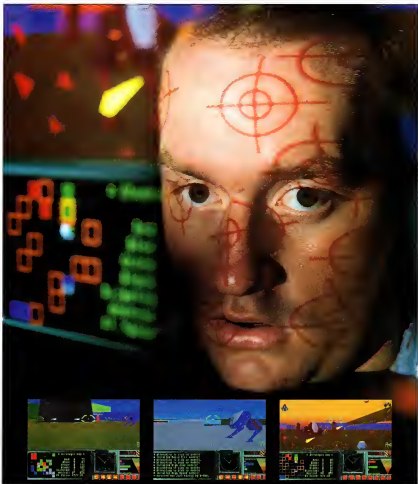
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SIMUTRONICS
MULTI-MEDIA



CD GALLERY

Dune

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Virgin
PC-CD ROM

DESIGNER
THEME
PLAYERS
LEVELS

Cryo
RPG
1
N/A

Arrakis, third planet in the Canopus system, is not exactly the French Riviera. Essentially a massive desert where daytime temperatures can soar to 350 degrees, Arrakis, aka Dune, is a planetary pesthole dominated by violent siroccos and gargantuan sandworms. Yet despite its inhospitable climate, unstable topography, and creepy life-forms, Arrakis is the most sought-after plum in the empire. It seems that this desert world is the only known source of melange, a mysterious spice that not only extends the lifespan of those who use it, but also serves as the prime component in the deep space navigation process known as "folding."

Because of its strategic importance, Arrakis has become the focal point in a bitter rivalry among the ruling houses of the empire. For years, spice mining was the exclusive province of the House of Harkonnen, but when the Emperor invites the House of Atreides to also take up residence on Dune to facilitate spice mining, it's an offer Duke Leto can't refuse.

As both a series of books by the late SF author Frank Herbert and, more recently, a cult film from Dino De Laurentiis and director David Lynch (who also helmed *Erazerhead*, *The Elephant Man*, and *Twin Peaks*), *Dune* provides rich source material for a computer adventure. In fact, Virgin Games, which holds the electronic gaming rights to the title, had already published two different versions of the sandy saga prior to this CD release. The first game was developed in France by Cryo Entertainment Systems,

while *Dune II* was created by Westwood Associates.

This multimedia edition of *Dune* is an enhanced version of the Cryo game, in which the player, as Paul Atreides, son of Duke Leto, finds his destiny amidst the sand, spice, and mammoth earthworms of Arrakis. As the game begins, the House of Atreides has just arrived on Dune—much to the displeasure of the Harkonnens—with a limited amount of time in which to straighten out the planet's spice production problems before the Emperor recalls them.



You must use a variety of machines in your conquest for the invaluable spice.

The heart of this game, however, is not the Intermecine politics of a far-flung future empire, but rather the tactical and personal situation faced by Paul Atreides, who must rally the Harkonnen slaves, the ironically named Fremen, in order to solve the riddle of the spice and overcome the ambitions of the evil Harkonnens. The game ends when Paul and the Fremen have taken control of all the fortresses on Arrakis.

The main display offers a first-person view of the action, with a menu-based conversation system, movement commands, and access to a book of lore which serves as a small database of *Dune*-related information. The graphics are superb, a deft mixture of FMV, bit-mapped graphics, and superb texture-mapping for the Ornthopter flight

Dune: The Transition

"When we originally sat down to do the CD version of *Dune*," explained Virgin Games producer Robb Alvey, "I resisted the idea of simply taking the existing floppy disk game and adding speech to it. I felt we should give players something that really enhanced the game play.

"First we made sure that the lip syncing was perfect. Then we added the full-motion video clips—eleven, I believe—from the movie, and produced a new Roland Sound Canvas music track. Finally, we did the texture mapping for the [Ornthopter] flight scenes. It took about four months to make the new material."

The impressive results show that a CD version of a pre-existing PC product can do more than add voice-overs to the floppy product without busting the budget.

Well done, Virgin.

sequences. Interestingly, despite the fact that Virgin's license is based on the movie, only Paul Atreides actually resembles the actor who portrayed him in the film (Kyle MacLachlan).

Dune is a strong game, one which makes excellent use of its source material but is not a give-away to fans of the books and/or film. Its epic scope, and excellent use of digitized speech and full-motion video provide a dramatic grandeur frequently missing from tactical-oriented computer games.

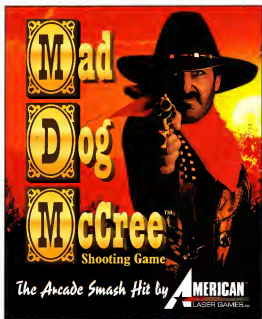
— Bill Kunkel

COMPLEXITY
GRAPHICS
SOUND
PLAYABILITY
REPLAYABILITY

Average
89%
94%
88%
89%

OVERALL 91%

LIVE MOTION PICTURE ACTION



Outlaw Mad Dog McCree and his henchmen have taken over a wild west frontier town, locked the sheriff in his own jail, and kidnapped the mayor and his daughter. Sharp shooting is a must in this arcade classic where the player must save the town, rescue the mayor and his daughter, and triumph in a final showdown against Mad Dog himself.

It's the Rollicking '30s and someone has killed popular singer Johnny Rock in this action-packed gangster whodunit. The player will need to navigate the back streets, gaming halls, funeral parlors and the dirty sections of this city to get at the clues held by a number of shady characters and solve this murder mystery. Bad guys with machine guns provide a high level of challenge.



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CD GALLERY

Tony La Russa Baseball II CD

PUBLISHER SYSTEM SSI
PC-CD ROM

THEME	Sports
PLAYERS	1-2
LEVELS	N/A

In the early days of CD-ROM games, players could find few original products and a lot of "shovelware" (repackaged PC products that only use the CD for storage in place of game disks). Lately, the trend has been to still make CD versions of PC games, but to greatly upgrade the titles so that they appeal both to CD-ROM owners and the original PC version's fans. **Tony La Russa II CD** (**Tony II CD**) is a far cry from shovelware. SSI added more of the features that made **Tony La Russa Baseball II** a hit in its floppy disk version and the PC game's expansion disks for the ultimate version of one of the top baseball games available.

Tony La Russa Baseball II and **HardBall III** are currently the best PC baseball games. These two systems are in a constant struggle for the number one position that both deserve for different

reasons. Each has features that attract different types of players, but they are both very good programs that baseball fans can enjoy. **Tony II CD** leapfrogs its own PC version

because it is a major upgrade of the special effects, an expansion of the unique features and a major savings on hard disk space. If you install **Tony II** and its three expansion disks, the files take up far more than the 4.6 MB necessary for **Tony II CD**. At a time when hard disk space is valuable and there never seems to be enough of it, it is a pleasure to simply pop in the CD when you want to play baseball and keep your hard disk free for other games. The relatively small amount of hard disk space that **Tony II CD** needs is relegated to saved seasons, teams and stats.

Tony II won over PC baseball fans because it allowed players to easily modify game conditions and control the action on the screen as either an arcade game or managing game. The representation of a season in **Tony II** allows quick access to any game or to simply play out a game in memory. You can simulate an entire season in about 20 minutes. There are too many features of **Tony II** to mention, but it suffices to say that they are all intact in **Tony II CD**. Some of these features are expanded. For example, there are 50% more replays on the video monitors in the ball parks. This simple enhancement injects more excitement into a game.

Most of the enhancements to **Tony II CD** are in the graphics and sound effects areas. While **HardBall III** used Al Michaels to announce the plays in each game, **Tony II** presented nationally-syndicated announcer Ron Barr. **Tony II CD** increases the amount of commentary by Barr. The result is a game that feels televised. **Tony II** had a wonderful collection of sound effects. **Tony II CD** adds more sound

CHICAGO N				VS.	CINCINNATI			
PITCHER	I	ERA	L V	PITCHER	I	ERA		
BROWN, 3-FINGE	R	1.04	3	SOTO, MARIO	R	2.73		
BATTING ORDER	B	AVG	P	BATTING ORDER	B	AVG		
CUYLER, KIKI	R	.355	10	2B MORGAN, JOE	L	.320		
CRIVARRETTI, PHIL	L	.268	10	3B PEREZ, TONY	R	.217		
WILSON, MARK	R	.316	12	1B KLUSZEWSKI, TED	L	.326		
WILLIAMS, BILLY	L	.333	11	LF FOSTER, GEORGE	R	.320		
BENKS, ERNIE	R	.313	11	CF ROSE, PETE	S	.348		
HARTNETT, GABBY	R	.339	11	C BENCH, JOHNNY	R	.293		
SANTO, RON	R	.213	10	RF GRIFFEY, KEN	L	.336		
EVERS, JOHNNY	L	.241	8	SS CONCEPCION, DAVE	R	.281		
BROWN, 3-FINGE	S	.204	1	P SOTO, MARIO	R	.167		
BENCH				PITCHERS				
PITCHERS				PLAY BALL				
PLAY BALL				PITCHERS				
PITCHERS				BENCH				

effects with the same high quality. The crack of the bat is perfect. Close your eyes and the crowd noises transport you to your favorite ballpark.

Tony II CD looks as great as it sounds. The increased number of replays is only one upgrade. Each and every close-up and similar scenes where detail is important exhibit a greater resolution. **Tony II CD** uses very few actual video clips, but the detail of the animations make up for the lack of "real" scenes. There are also digitized pictures of Hall-of-Famers on the CD that pop up when they are at bat. The overall look of the game has improved because of the storage space that the CD offers.

Enhancements to graphics and sounds may not be enough to win over all customers, but the addition of the original game's three expansion disks may do the trick. The Fantasy Manager, Fantasy Draft and AL/NL Stadiums disks increase the number of ways to play and enjoy **Tony II CD** and make the CD the complete **Tony II** package. It's also nice to view the actual ballparks for each game. **Tony II CD** has an incredible number of baseball legends and plenty of classic teams to satisfy the baseball buff in any household.

The CD enhancements take the basic game to a level where "multimedia" applies and players new to CD-ROM games will find an exciting, complete baseball package worthy of La Russa's endorsement.

— Russ Cecco/a



COMPLEXITY	Easy
GRAPHICS	85%
SOUND	90%
PLAYABILITY	85%
REPLAYABILITY	90%

OVERALL 85%

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CD GALLERY

Stellar 7: Draxon's Revenge

PUBLISHER **Dynamix**
SYSTEM **3DO**

THEME	Action
PLAYERS	1
LEVELS	N/A

Ever since the old Commodore 64 days, **Stellar 7** has been a favorite game for PC gamers everywhere. The futuristic tank game now hits the big time.

Drax is back with a bang. **Stellar 7** for 3DO is light years ahead of its predecessors, offering an intense "David and Goliath" type arcade experience. While the older versions of the game were great for their time, the new 3DO version is absolutely astounding in the overall game play and intense graphics. The player pilots the *Raven*, a heavily armed hovercraft that represents mankind's last hope of survival in the face of a hostile invasion. *Gir Draxon*, Supreme Overlord of the *Arcturan Empire*, is preparing his Invasion force on seven separate worlds within striking distance of Earth. The worlds are connected via warp links,

which allow units to pass between them without the normal delays associated with interstellar travel. Every planet holds greater dangers, more destructive enemies and a planetary guardian that must be defeated before progressing to the next world.

All action occurs from a first-person perspective in the cockpit of the *Raven*. In the lower center of the display, a red power bar indicates the energy level of the *Raven*. Energy is not depleted through the use of weapons, only through sustaining damage. If the *Raven* sustains sufficient damage that the energy level is zero, the craft explodes and *Draxon* is given free reign on Earth. Energy levels may be replenished if one successfully finds and docks with a fuel bay. Please note that docking is impossible while cloaked.

Cloaking is just one of the seven possible functions performed by power modules in the *Raven*. Not all of these power modules will be available at any given moment; their accessibility is governed by the difficulty level selected. Other types include a super cannon, a thruster for bursts of speed, a mine deployer, a jump thruster to boost the *Raven* to higher altitudes and two other special add-ons that require some more detailed explanation.

The *Eel Shield* allows the *Raven* to ram into opponents as opposed to shooting them. With it activated, the enemy's shield polarity is reversed on contact and it is destroyed. The *Raven* sustains no damage, but the *Eel Shield* is not effective against planetary guardians.

The *Cat's Eye* allows *Raven* to see enemies who are cloaked. These only appear at certain points in the game.

The most important



aspect of piloting the *Raven* is to stay mobile. Stopping or spinning in place will result in rapid destruction. Shoot all enemies of the same type in sequence in a given level and you will be rewarded with extra power modules for the *Raven*.



Players will encounter dangerous foes as they speed around the planets.

In the first and fourth levels, look in the lower left corner of the map for a stationary structure that looks different from the other ones on that planet. If you destroy either of these formations, you will automatically be transported to the last level of the game.

Don't assume that this is an easy way to win; however, **Stellar 7** is a fast-paced shooter that will test the most battle hardened veterans. Strap yourself into a futuristic tank simulation that will have you on the edge of your seat!

— Ed Dille



COMPLEXITY	Intricate
GRAPHICS	92%
SOUND	96%
PLAYABILITY	90%
REPLAYABILITY	90%

OVERALL 92%

WWF Rage in the Cage

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Arena
Sega CD

THEME Pro Wrestling
PLAYERS 1-2
LEVELS N/A

The last decade has seen more change occur in the pro wrestling business than did the previous half century. In 1983, rasslin' was still a regional business, with well over a dozen different promotions carving up the territorial United States, with none of them possessing even a remote resemblance to national dominance. Since then, technology and ambition have conspired to produce two national promotions: Ted Turner's WCW (the old Jim Crockett Mid-Atlantic territory which was part of the National Wrestling Alliance) and Vince McMahon's WWF. The WCW gained national access through the cable revolution and TBS' Superstation status. The WWF, meanwhile, attained its top dog position through the marketing skill and vision of its honcho, McMahon, and the drawing power of its greatest star, Hulk Hogan.

Now we have the first pro wrestling simulation to appear in CD format, Arena/Acclaim's **Rage in the Cage**, a title used previously on one of Acclaim's NES wrestling carts. Hulk Hogan isn't on hand for this historic occasion—he's drifted away from the WWF in recent

What's Missing at the Maul?

WWF Rage in the Cage offers more wrestlers and special features than any previous WWF video game, but there are a couple of extremely curious omissions. The most notable missing feature is the tag team match, the best format ever developed for these games. Also MIA is the battle royal feature inaugurated in Acclaim's **Royal Rumble**.

But the most intriguing of the no-show features is the elimination of chairshots when outside the ring. In earlier games, once the action spilled outside the squared circle, a steel folding chair could be used as a weapon. This was not only a great visual feature, it greatly enhanced the realism of the simulation.

C'mon, guys, give us back the tag matches and the chairs! Bruiser Brody would be ashamed of you.

months, reportedly because of McMahon's much-publicized legal problems—but 20 WWF starwrestlers did make the cut, the most wrestlers to ever appear in a single game. Both Headshrinkers and Nasty Boys are on hand, as is Rick Martel, Tanaka, I.R.S., Bret Hart, Lex Luger, The Undertaker and many more. True, DiBiase, Mr. Perfect, Kamala and Big Bossman aren't with the WWF at press time, but that's to be expected in the transient world of pro grads.

The game itself is slightly cleaner than previous Genesis WWF contests, but the three-button controller is still tough to work with, making moves that are no-brainers on the SNES version of **Royal Rumble**, for example, into major achievements. The "Rage in the Cage" itself is a match held within the confines of the legendary Freddy Blassie Steel Cage (though Blassie's name is not invoked.) The cage obscures the in-ring action somewhat, but the novelty of the gimmick—the winner is the first man to climb out of the ring—more than makes up for it.

In addition to the large number of wrestlers and the cage match feature, there are several cosmetic improvements over previous WWF games. For example, each wrestler's specialty move can be viewed in digitized FMV, and Howard Finkel's actual ring announcements are reproduced with excellent fidelity. Unfortunately, the digitized photos and FMV sequences—which are accompanied by artificial crowd audio but no impact sound effects—are pretty sloppy. In fact, one digitized shot featuring Lex Luger is so badly reproduced it looks like it was taken with heat-sensitive thermal imaging film.

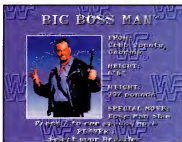
The area where improvement should



The action is fast and furious as the muscled maniacs master mauling.



really be made, however, is in producing a greater variety of styles among the wrestlers. For example, with the exception of each man's specialty move, there is no real difference between Bret Hart—a technique-oriented grappler who weighs around 235 lbs.—and the gigantic sumo, Yokozuna. Since it's just as easy to throw a running dropkick with the



The biggest, baddest stars of the World Wrestling Federation await your control.

massive Kamala as it is with the much smaller, and more agile, Shawn Michaels, there's no sense of variables among the wrestlers. Sculptured has done an excellent job in physically reproducing the way these wrestlers look and move; now it's time to focus on the way they wrestle.

Until that element of the design is mastered, all the FMV frills in the world won't represent a flicker of meaningful change.

— Bill Kunkel

COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	86%
SOUND	72%
PLAYABILITY	89%
REPLAYABILITY	93%

OVERALL 89%



PORTABLE PLAYTIME

Metal Masters

PUBLISHER
SYSTEM

Electro Brain
Game Boy

THEME	Fighting
MEGABITS	2
PLAYERS	1 or 2
LEVELS	N/A

Electro Brain's latest offering for the Game Boy is a science fiction adventure set in a future where the national pastime is watching one-on-one arena combat between giant armored robots, piloted by people.

Gamers begin with a robot which they can customize with credits awarded for winning Tournament fights. The default equipment on the player's robot varies by difficulty level. Starting at Easy, players are given an improved robot with upgraded body armor, an upgraded set of legs and weapons that are more than adequate to shred his/her opponents in the early rounds. Players playing on the Hard setting begin with an unimproved robot whose weapons are only one step up from the most basic equipment.

Before each round, players may change their equipment by going to the Improve Screen. Here the player may choose from three different body styles, eight different arms (weapons) and three sets of legs. The player sees a picture of his/her robot, displaying current equipment and damage status. As gamers use the direction pad to choose from the various components, the bottom half of the screen displays a picture of the equipment, its name, cost and how much damage it can take (and cause).

The manual doesn't mention that undamaged components are sold back for full credit when upgrading, so players may be a little confused about how they ever will afford that 40 credit Powersaw after being awarded one credit for winning the first fight.

The action unfolds in side perspective.

Tournament fights take place in huge arenas, sometimes with crowds in the background, other times not. Not that it matters either way, as the crowd doesn't move or make noise. The play area occupies 3/4 of the screen with the bottom 1/4 taken up by status bars indicating the condition of Body, Left and Right Arm and Legs for player and opponent. At the top of the screen, boxes contain each players' score and the timer, which shows the time remaining in each three minute round.

After every four rounds, the player must guide his robot through the city,



wading through the Baron's tanks and helicopters. If the robot doesn't get torn up by them, it must then face an especially fierce robotic opponent. If the player wins, he/she finds a piece of the super robot and is awarded a bonus of five credits. If the player loses, well, so much for the free world.

In addition to punching and smashing, some arms endow the player's robot with the ability to fire rockets. Firing rate and availability varies from arm type to arm type, but exactly how is not disclosed in the manual, so players are left in the dark as to which combinations of arm types are the most effective.

The opponents get increasingly savvy. In the early rounds they charge in swinging, trying to batter the unaware player into submission, but their skill and their armament improve and in the later rounds the player faces heavily armed, armored opponents ducking in for finesse shots to the body.

The player can also take advantage of skill shots. If gamers concentrate on shots to the body, they can end the round in as little as 18 seconds, and the faster the fight is over, the less damage a player will take. Of course, more credits are awarded for totally disassembling an opponent, but this takes longer and opens up the player for considerably more damage.

The sound fares better than the standard graphics. In combat, sound effects definitely let the player know when his/her punches have connected, although it's a little harder to hear when the player is taking damage. The music is good; probably some of the best on the Game Boy.

Finally, despite its good or bad points, **Metal Masters** never effectively gives players the feeling that they are piloting a 200-foot tall,

rocket-launching robot. Whether programming could have solved this is debatable; the ultimate constraint is the small size of the Game Boy screen.

Consequently, **Metal Masters** is never as engaging as it might have been.

— John W. Hardin

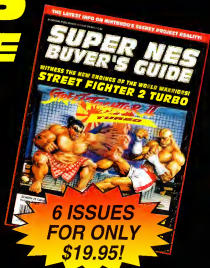
COMPLEXITY	Average
GRAPHICS	79%
SOUND	85%
PLAYABILITY	80%
REPLAYABILITY	79%

OVERALL 74%

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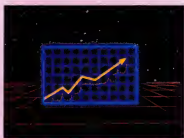
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HEGBO



KUNKEL REPORT

Nintendo Never Sleeps and Other Stories

by Bill Kunkel

Have you ever wondered why there are no vowels in the access passwords used in Nintendo-compatible software? If you have, I bet you came to the same kinds of silly conclusions that I did. I presumed, for example, that using actual words might make the passcodes easier to initially guess and, later, remember, something Nintendo might theoretically be anxious to avoid.

But, no. That has absolutely nothing to do with the Vowel Ban. According to several licensed, third-party developers we spoke with, Nintendo doesn't allow the use of vowels in letter selection for passcodes because users might take it upon themselves to enter "vulgar or profane" words.

We will now pause for a moment while you giggle, drop your jaw or respond in some other, appropriate manner to this astonishing piece of news.

This is not to say that these imaginative passwords would actually produce a result. Rather, it is the very idea that a SNES game screen could be made to contain undesirable language which freaked out Nintendo to the point where this is now actually a part of the company policy.

Problem: while everyone knows that "a", "e", "i", "o", and "u" are vowels, the folks at Nintendo apparently didn't hear that "sometimes" the letter "y" can also be used in vowel-ish ways. Not only that, but one of the words it can be used to spell is "Styx," as in the river, as in a satanic reference! C'mon, Nintendo, let's get it together! As Virgin Games proved in one of its best-known **7th Guest** puzzles, there are many English words which can be produced using "y" as the sole vowel, some of which could be offensive (tryst) or scary (crypt) or even overtly ethnic (gypsy).

This whole process becomes

especially comical when one examines some of the games which use these truncated password lists. LucasArts' excellent **Zombies Ate My Neighbors** (Konami), for example, includes scenes of chainsaw-wielding maniacs slaughtering helpless babies (sans blood, of course)! And Nintendo is worried that someone will enter the word "pupu" on their Passcode Screen?

Hello? Earth to Nintendo.

The most disturbing element in this whole process, however, is the ease with which powerful publishers knuckle under to this kind of insanity. The history of

Nintendo never gets into the computer business in the United States—keyboards without vowels might be more than even the Big N could market.

3D0 or 3D0n't?

For the first time since the announcement of the 3D0 standard, a large segment of the industry seems to feel the system may not fly. And, it must be acknowledged that the high price point, woefully inadequate software support, and poorly executed rollout constitute an undeniable footshot.

What we're looking at now is two different forces moving toward the next generation of home entertainment technology. The Black Box Army (3D0, Laser-Active, CD-I, Amiga³², etc.) is taking the high ground, coming in at \$700-\$1,000 with hopes of bringing that price down as low as possible. CDI has already dropped its price point to \$500 and it may go even lower, but unless the next generation of software shows the promised bump in quality, running TV infomercials all night long won't help Philips.

The other contingent is the Low End Group, video game makers like Sega, Nintendo and even Atari. Entrenched at the lower price points, these players will be producing increasingly sophisticated machines, such as Sega's Saturn and Nintendo's Project Reality, at prices that should make the technology mass market-ready.

Most of the industry is frankly rooting for the 3D0, as is anyone who has played Dynamix' **Stellar 7** on the system. Some killer games will be produced on this hardware, and that turns on both hardcore gamers and developers. But the brute fact is that serious doubts have been created by 3D0's failure to make development tools available and the embarrassing lack of product.

At its price point, 3D0 can ill afford to make another such mistake.



The "consonants only" policy used by Nintendo forbids actual pass "words."

literature, art, music, films, etc. are rife with tales of creative people going to the wall against the forces of censorship. It is disappointing to see the gusto with which the video game creators have rolled over when confronted with the prospect of "making Sega/Nintendo angry."

In the final analysis, however, while Sega is worried about games that feature disembowelment, Nintendo is more concerned with the process of disembowelment. One can only hope that

"This is not to say that these imaginative passwords would actually produce a result."

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FANDOM CENTRAL

GEA Takes Its First Step

by Arnie Katz

The Gaming Enthusiasts of America (GEA), the national fan organization, was launched with great fanfare a few months ago. Now it has moved out of the realm of the purely theoretical by distributing a membership packet and the first **GEA News**.

Many leading fans and pros contributed to this 24-page issue. Few fanzines have had such an illustrious supporting cast. Editor Andy Saito, best known for **Totally Super NES**, has assembled the material in an attractive and readable format. He seems an excellent choice to produce the club's bimonthly official organ, but he's going to have to yank the reins harder.

GEA News is a fanzine searching for its niche. Writers and artists go off in a lot of different directions. Experimentation is healthy, but some contributors could've used firmer editorial guidance in selecting their material and a sharp copy-editing pencil.



The news and reviews are all right, but not as interesting as interviews with Tommy Tallarico and Spencer Nilsen,

Mike Davila's report on the Japan Nintendo show, and MJ Lesnick's "Aaaaaaack!" column. **GEA News** also has my article with advice for fanzine editors that goes into more depth than in these pages.

Not all the material is good. Jess Ragan has not yet learned the difference between humor and character assassination, and Zach Mestin's column of alleged inside stories is unfortunate. It would be tragic if fandom became an arena for pros to play petty politics. Pros can add a lot to the atmosphere of fandom, but not unless they are willing to kick back and act like fans.

Overall, this publication is a major new asset to the electronic gaming fandom. Considering that it costs only \$10 to join GEA for a year, I recommend a 12-month trial. Send checks to The Gaming Enthusiasts of America, 155 Westwood Dr., Park Forest, IL 60466.

The Guru #3.5

Edited by Brian Goss
P.O. Box 5442

Pasadena, TX 77508-5442

Frequent, \$2 per issue, 28 pages

This spiral bound fanzine has plenty of reviews and a page of reasonably current gaming gossip, but the best items are Bernard Dy's piece on gaming ratings and the section on football simulations. Kraig Kujawa's analysis of the controversy surrounding **Mortal Kombat** shows considerable thought and perception, too. The back-page humor bits are on target again this time and have become my favorite feature.

Highlighted by Patrick Wilson's color cover, the graphics and layout continue to improve. **The Guru**, already one of the hobby's more attractive publications, figures to look even better as Brian perfects the mechanical aspects of magazine production.

The Guru covers all of electronic gaming, not just cartridges, and the PC reviews are extensive and informative. Brian still gets a little over-formal occa-

sionally, but there's no question that his zine is worth a try for any serious gamer.

SNES Gaming #5

Edited by Rich Wigstone
770 Concord Lane

Hoffman Estates, IL 60195-1835

Bi-monthly, \$1.50 per issue, 8 pages

A comparative survey of new racing games for the SNES is the lead feature in this newsletter-style fanzine. Some of the material is less inspired, such as the contest for the best game ideas, but the fanzine as a whole is good—and improving steadily.

Though it focuses on Nintendo's 16-Bit system, it is less insular than many one-platform titles. That makes reading more appealing for those who want to discuss SNES games but don't think companies are angels or devils.

Warzone #2

Edited by Matthew Smith
2509 Newington Ct.

Clemmons, NC 27012

Frequent, \$1 per issue, 12 pages

Lots of short pieces, including software, hardware, fanzine, and movie reviews, fill this enthusiastic fanzine. One thing's for sure, if you don't like the first item on a page, there's likely to be one that's more to your taste on the next column.

The reviews may strike some as a bit extreme. Matt and friends generally praise a cartridge to the skies or consign it to the abyss. No one wants wishy-washy criticism, but a more balanced approach would enhance credibility.

Matt's sense of humor about himself and his fanzine scores lots of points with me. His best issues still lie in the future, but his warm personality and easy-going ways make the current **Warzone** a comfortable gaming forum.

Attention fanzine editors: If you'd like your fanzine reviewed in a future issue, send it to: Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

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THE JURY

We had some excellent rough-and-tumble reviews come in for Contest #14, and it took some bloodthirsty elimination to select the final winners that follow.

Please, gamers of the Jury, remember to keep your reviews to 200 words or less, because once again we had to eliminate some fine work just for that reason. Read the rules at the right!

Mutant League Football

EA

Genesis

1-2 Players

Winning Review by Brian Czulno

So you think that watching stars like Joe Montana and Michael Invin is the only way to spend a Sunday afternoon? Well folks, put down that remote control, pop **Mutant League Football** into your Genesis and get ready to watch some real men—or should I say, real aliens, skeletons, trolls and robots—butt heads!

Fans of Electronic Arts sports titles will not be disappointed with this release. **Mutant League** offers a unique approach to the usual mundane sport of football. The game control is much like **John Madden's Football**, but this easy controlling system is the only place these two games are similar.

As a mutant player you are able to set the game's "gore" level from the "only



The hurried quarterback has to make a quick decision on each and every play!

for the squeamish" Rough level to the Annihilation level. The blood, bones and body parts really fly in this level. Choose your field from the space Ice of "The Pen" to the low gravity of "Asteroid 66." Finally, you can choose gruesome audibles and even bribe or (every sports buff's dream), kill the ref.

Mutant League Football could easily replace the NFL as America's favorite league. The only question is, "Can you stomach total football annihilation?"



The coach will give players some advice, but is it enough to win?

Runner-Up Review by Bob Workman

What **Mortal Kombat** did for fighting games, **Mutant League Football** does for sports. It's basically a fresh mix of **Splatterhouse** and **John Madden Football**, although it doesn't play as well as the latter.

However, there's a lot to like about this game anyway. You can choose from 19 teams, each with its own star players (I like *The Slicer*, myself), and then take your pick from a variety of stadiums loaded with pits and mines. Then the actual game begins.

There's a whole lot of plays to take a look at, and some involve such rough acts as killing the referee and running your man right off the field (and basically off the asteroid you're playing on).

What really makes this game special is the awesome Two-player Mode, where

you and a friend can play a really mean game of football and kill each other trying to score. A nice new touch for Electronic Arts.

Overall, this is a good one to play until you can watch the real thing, and I certainly hope **Mutant League Hockey** is just as good. Gotta killer Zamboni there...

Join the Jury

Review a game in EG's
monthly contest!

Each month, **Electronic Games'** critics review dozens of new releases. They do a great job, but a lot of our readers are knowledgeable and perceptive about the games, too. Now, our unique monthly contest lets you strut your stuff. We'll pick a video cart each month, and challenge gamers to review it. Then, in *The Jury*, **EG** will print the best ones—and give a free game cart to the winner.

The rules are simple:

1. All reviews must be of the nominated game.
2. Entrants can submit only **one** review of each game.
3. All submissions become the property of **EG**.
4. Reviews should be 200 words or less, typed double-spaced.
5. The month's best review, as determined by **EG** editors, earns the writer the currently available video or computer game of his or her choice (sorry, no Neo-Geo carts).
6. The contest is open to anyone who has not sold professionally to **EG** within the previous 12 months (exclusive of this contest).

Game for Contest #16:

Aladdin/Sega - Genesis/
Capcom - SNES

Deadline for this month's contest:

March 1, 1994

Send entries to:

The Jury (Electronic Games)
330 S. Decatur, Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107

...and don't forget to tell us what video game you'd like if you are the winner!

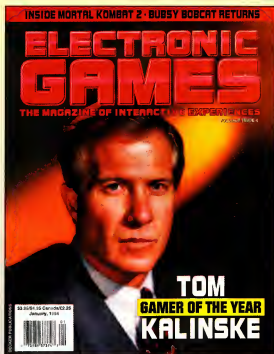
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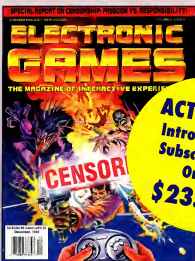
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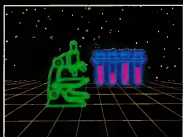
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TEST LAB

Amiga CD³²

Commodore Business Machines
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Multimedia Bandwagon Plays a New Tune

When NEC introduced the first CD-ROM peripherals for game consoles several years ago, it appeared to have been the equivalent of opening Pandora's Box. Although the TG-16 peripheral was introduced before the market was ready, and therefore did not survive consumer speculation, its impact on the manufacturing side of the industry was significant. Virtually every major hardware company initiated development of a multimedia platform.

Some of these designs, like the Sega Mega CD, entered at the 16-Bit level. Others, like 3DO and the Amiga CD³² profiled here, waited for a 32-Bit architecture. Nintendo may attempt to pull a coup on Sega by coming in with a 64-Bit multimedia console, but their positioning strategy may already be a moot point in light of the Atari Jaguar. Atari, who failed to view Nintendo as a threat in the early '80s, forfeited their position of pre-eminence in the game industry as a result of that underestimation. With regard to inexpensive home computers, they lost a similar market share to Commodore. Subsequently, Commodore's edge faded in the face of pressure from the IBM world, despite the fact that many game players preferred the graphic presentation power of the Amiga over all other platforms.

While much more space could be devoted to this progression of events, the salient fact to remember is that Atari and Commodore, the companies that started the entire industry, have been non-contenders for quite some time now. Further, both of these marketing behemoths are attempting to re-enter the spotlight at virtually the same time. In the November issue of *EG*, Bill Kunkel provided a first look at the Atari Jaguar. Additional coverage of this unit is slated for a future Test Lab. This month, Test Lab will evaluate Commodore's composition for the multimedia bandwagon, the Amiga CD³².

Like the competition, Commodore has designed its machine around a set of proprietary chips. The Amiga video chip set is fully NTSC/PAL compatible and can reproduce SVGA quality at 800 x 600 resolution with an optional RGB adapter. Two video accelerator coprocessors perform Blitter (Bit Block Transfer) operations, which speeds line drawing, area fills and block moves for improved performance. Yet another video coprocessor allows video control synchronous with beam position, which eliminates the "redraw" effect of some complex images. Finally, a CDXL Mode permits true color compressed images to be sent from the CD-ROM to the unit in a single block, then decompressed in a hardware buffer.

The Amiga's CD-ROM drive is a double speed drive, like that of the 3DO unit. This feature acts to minimize the access time delays of traditional drives by spinning the disk at twice the normal rate. As a result, compressed data is transmitted across the bus at 300 kb/sec vice 150

kb/sec. Greater data transfer rates have been achieved by the Panasonic LaserActive system (reviewed in the January Test Lab), but it appears that the double speed drive will be accepted as the next industry "standard" for multimedia game consoles and computers.

Also like 3DO, the Amiga CD³² will introduce MPEG-1 video compression technology via a separate full motion video add-on module. For an additional \$249 above the base price, users can enjoy the new VIDEO CD standard (74-minute movies with CD quality sound) and newer game titles slated to appear in late '94. The latter will feature Amiga graphics in the foreground genlocked and overlaid with full motion video in the background, very similar to the presentation method currently used by Pioneer LaserActive.

The Amiga CD³² uses a separate coprocessor to manage all audio functions. Sound may be output in three formats: monaural audio via an RF modulator port, Amiga 8-Bit stereo with four voices, or 18-Bit CD quality audio with 8x over sampling. The unit can present these sounds via the existing television speakers, an optional headset or directly through a stereo or amplifier array.

One of the nicer features of the Amiga CD³² is the ability to use existing Amiga computer peripherals, such as a mouse, joystick or light pen, in conjunction with the unit. The basic controller is an 11 button unit which is plugged into the first of two ports. Using Amiga's method of daisy chaining controllers, up to eight controllers per port may be used. Currently, Commodore does not have any multi-player games which can take

Like the competition, Commodore has designed its machine around a set of proprietary chips. The Amiga video chip set is fully NTSC/PAL compatible and can reproduce SVGA quality at 800 x 600 resolution with an optional RGB adapter.

advantage of this feature, but it leaves the door open for later designs.

Speaking of designs, it should be no secret to followers of this column that both the quantity and quality of available software has a large influence on the rating any new system receives. As an example, 3DO was recently given high marks for quantity of titles under development, though some consternation was expressed at the obvious lack of a system selling title, such as Sonic proved to be for the Sega Genesis. Conversely, Panasonic's LaserActive received very high marks for its premier game title, *Pyramid Patrol* from Taito, but was castigated for not having enough follow on products in development to justify the system's asking price. The Amiga CD³² falls in between these extremes.

Commodore has 121 software developers currently onboard, with 125 CD³² titles slated for release by mid-1994. The vast majority of these games are conversions from existing computer products as opposed to original designs. Examples of this lineup include *Syndicate*, *Pirates Gold*, *Humans*, *Castles II*, *SimCity*, *Civilization* and other "classics" that have fared well up to this point. A secondary group consists of less well known products, some of which are European designs, that form a solid base of available titles but offer nothing truly striking to showcase the machine's capabilities.

The product which most closely accomplishes that goal is *Jurassic Park*, from

Ocean. Displayed at the recent COMDEX in Las Vegas, the Amiga CD³² version of this new game is the only one which actually incorporates full motion video from the film in the form of cut sequences between the levels. The effect is very nice, but it is exclusive of actual game play. When newer products appear that incorporate FMV directly into the interface, as will be possible with the aforementioned add-on module, gamers are more likely to sit up and take notice.



In terms of "cuteness" appeal, or the development of a signature character like Sonic or Mario, the closest thing going is James Pond. Originally developed by Millennium for the Amiga computer, this silicon icon is already in his third installment of classic arcade action. Although the graphic punch of this fishy detective series is lacking, each of these games offer multiple challenges for fans of Mario style designs. The second and third

installments in the series are currently available for the Amiga CD³².

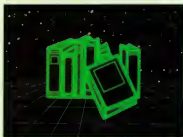
In terms of pricing, the Amiga CD³² is much more in line with what game players are willing to pay than either 3DO or Panasonic's LaserActive system. Further, it provides much more power per pixel than the correspondingly priced Sega CD system. Although the Jaguar has been discussed in this price range as well, their final retail figure has not been released. As such, for the time being at least, the Amiga CD³² is the most powerful multimedia unit that can be had for under \$500.00, as noted in the accompanying chart of technical specifications.

Where does that leave the now beleaguered consumer, who must sort through a proliferation of new multimedia formats? As before, it depends entirely on the needs of the individual player. 3DO's processing power is appealing but expensive, and each software title for that system will be at least one and a half times the normal asking price. The Amiga CD³² is more economical and has a reasonable number of titles to sustain it for the near term, but has yet to strut its stuff on the software shelf to a degree which would promote throwing caution to the wind. Panasonic has priced itself outside most player's pocket books and the Sega CD suffers as the least capable of the lot. Given all this, the best course of action appears to be to wait for Atari's entry into the arena and see whether or not it will drive the prices of all the competing systems down as well.

The multimedia bandwagon is still playing the overture; get up and go to the lobby for some popcorn until the action heats up.

Comparison of three Multimedia Formats

	3DO	Amiga CD ³²	Sega CD
CPU/Speed	ARM60/12 Mhz	68EC020/14 Mhz	2 x 68000/12 Mhz
Bits	32-Bit	32-Bit	16-Bit
MIPS	6 MIPS	3.5 MIPS	0.3 MIPS
Memory	1 MB VRAM, 2 MB DRAM	2 MB DRAM	64 Kb VRAM, 64 Kb SRAM
Non-Volatile RAM	Memory Card	1 Kb	8 Kb
Animation CELS	Yes (100s)	8 sprites (64-Bit) plus blitter objects	80 sprites (32-Bit)
Video Modes	320 x 200, 15 KHz, with hardware interpolation to 640 x 400	1280 x 400, 15 KHz	320 x 200, 15 KHz
Colors	256/32,768	256,000/16.8 million	64/512
Speed	64 million pixels/sec	7M pixels/sec	N/A
Price	\$699.00	\$399.00	\$399.00 for base unit and CD



LORE

Bubsy Bobcat's Totally Authorized Answer Book

Donald McCrary, Compute Books
192 pages (softbound, \$12.95)

Subtitled *The Official Guide to Playing Bubsy in: Claws Encounters of the Furred Kind*, the book begins with some words from the author and a few smug remarks from Bubsy just to set the proper mood. Fortunately, this was achieved without repeating "What could possibly go wrong?" even once. Using this book, possibly nothing will.

This is followed by Part I, comprising the cocky feline's explanations of a few of his favorite tricks through the game, such as holding up his hands on the roller coaster ride (to collect yarn balls), or bouncing off of spider webs. Part II consists of a brief note about how to defeat the boss woolies.

The rest of the book, all under Part III, is a chapter-by-chapter series of walk-throughs. There is usually more than one way to get through each one, but McCrary offers a few general hints and then suggests a specific path, illustrated with maps and screen shots. Bubsy, of course, usually has a few words to say at the beginning of each chapter and here and there throughout the text.

The text is clear and breezily written, the screen shots are reasonably sharp and appear on practically every page (frequently more than one). The maps (complete with coordinate grids and legends) should be very helpful in identifying the locations of one-ups, warp caves, mid-chapter marks and other landmarks.

Unlike most hint books, however, there are no descriptions of secret sequences or button-pushing combinations to achieve special powers or continuues. Everything recommended in this book seems to fit the "totally authorized" characterization.

In any case, and bearing in mind what it's for, reading the book is fun.

— Ross Chamberlain

Lemmings: The Official Companion

with Exclusive Game Disk
Mark Tsai and A.J. Aranyosi
Prima Publishing, 290 pages
(softbound, \$24.95)



One thing leads to another if you pick up *Lemmings: The Official Companion*.

Lemmings epitomize the tendency of one thing to follow another. As such, it is not surprising that Psygnosis, the creators of the original *Lemmings*, should continue over the cliff with this handsome companion book. Since its initial iteration on the Amiga, *Lemmings* has undergone a number of modifications when ported over to other formats. Owners of cartridge versions will find that they have some levels which are not covered by the book, although access codes for most levels are included. Wherever possible, the authors have delineated the differences between the Macintosh, Amiga and IBM versions. Generally, these are limited to minor changes in the victory conditions for each level.

After a brief interlude to provide some general playing hints to novice players, the main body of the work begins. The 120 levels are grouped in four blocks of 30 arranged by difficulty. Viewed in the aggregate, these are referred to as the Fun, Tricky, Taxing and Mayhem levels respectively. Each individual level solution contains four distinct parts.

The first is a code to access the level quickly, combined with a brief synopsis of the requirements contained in the Objective screen. Following this, there is an overview paragraph that provides some general tips about what to be aware of in that particular level. This allows players who want a hint, but not a specific solution, to stop reading and get back to the game. For those that need more guidance, the next two parts contain a step by step walk-through of the level and an annotated screen shot with call outs for each step. This is definitely a bit of overkill for the Fun and Tricky levels, but works with harder ones.

The final section in the main body contains solutions to the 16 levels provided on the accompanying disk. These puzzles are specifically designed to reinforce new strategies introduced in the book and are also arranged in groups of four each for the previously mentioned difficulty levels. For those who master the levels with ease, several self imposed methods of increasing the difficulty are introduced, including going for 100 percent of Lemmings saved and trying to best your time for each level.

Although all of the information contained in *Lemmings: The Official Companion* is pertinent and well presented, one cannot help but feel it was a stretch to make a book of this length for the material covered. For the asking price, despite the very nice add-on disk, equivalent treatment of *Oh No! More Lemmings* and *Lemmings 2: The Tribes* should have been included. A complete treatment of the three games would have made a much more solid offering.

— Ed Dille

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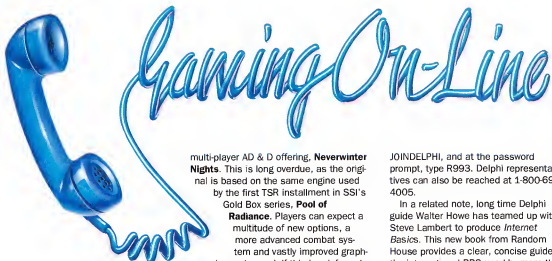
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HEGBO

Gaming On-Line



America OnLine

The lack of coverage for this service has doubtless been noticeable up to this point. Some explanation appears in order. AOL's membership has surged past 450,000 at a rate that prompted Advertising Age to proclaim "America On Line is 'IN', because it is easy to use," and that "Prodigy is 'OUT' because it is hobbled by older technology."

Despite this increase in popularity, AOL has continued to ignore the potential revenue that could be generated from upgrading their multi-player games section. Further, by their own admission, they have been managing this segment of the service "on the fly," without planning long range events like the tournaments and group activities that make the electronic gaming experience thrive on competing networks.



The Shadow of Yserbius, from TSN, is what the new AOL games will be like.

Happily, EG can now report a development which could be a first step in reversing that trend. AOL is implementing a completely new version of the

multi-player AD & D offering, **Neverwinter Nights**. This is long overdue, as the original is based on the same engine used by the first TSR installment in SSI's Gold Box series, **Pool of**

Radiance. Players can expect a multitude of new options, a more advanced combat system and vastly improved graphics and sound. If this is reinforced with the development of strong guild activities, such as those now active in TSN's **Shadow of Yserbius** and new **Gates of Twinnion**, AOL could see a tremendous increase in usage of this area. Such an increase would promote development of additional new games as well. If that chain of events occurs, expect to see greater coverage of AOL in the future, as they expand.

Genie

Rates are continuing to drop across the board, but appear to be stabilizing out between three and four dollars an hour for all the services. Genie is the latest to announce new pricing. Monthly subscription fees have been lowered to \$8.95, which includes four hours of non-prime time access. Additional non-prime time usage fees are \$3.00 per hour, a 50 percent reduction from their previous rate. What keeps the prices coming down? Volume, plain and simple. The more users that tap into the system, the lower the cost for everybody.

Delphi

Delphi Internet Services, formerly General Videotex Corporation, has been acquired by The News Corporation Limited, the Australian based global media company. As a result, expect Delphi to take on a more international feel. The gaming area should become even more expansive than it already is and new players are invited to try five hours of free access time.

To join, dial by modem 1-800-365-4636 (current internet users should telenet to "delphi.com" instead). After connecting, press return once or twice. At the Username prompt, enter

JOINDELPHI, and at the password prompt, type R993. Delphi representatives can also be reached at 1-800-695-4005.

In a related note, long time Delphi guide Walter Howe has teamed up with Steve Lambert to produce *Internet Basics*. This new book from Random House provides a clear, concise guide to the international BBS used by more than 15 million people.

Anyone who has ever been on the Internet can testify that it is a confusing place, where E-Mail addresses alone can be 8-10 lines long with lots of special coding. *Internet Basics* addresses all the special protocols and online etiquette that confuse inexperienced users, plus it is a complete reference to all the services of the Internet, including multi-player games like MUD (Multi-User Dungeon). A book such as this is long overdue and will certainly improve online productivity and pleasure.

Prodigy

Prodigy has extended its line of edutainment type games with the introduction of **Square Off**, a math-based title that challenges players to create equations that equal target numbers. The reverse approach, reminiscent of that used in *Jeopardy*, encourages players to view numbers from a new perspective.

Square Off can only be played once a day for seven minutes. Users find as many missing numbers or operators as possible in the allotted time. Each correct answer yields points and reveals a piece of the puzzle. Incorrect responses are penalized. High scores for the day are posted for all players to see.

MPG Net

MPG Net displayed a sneak preview of its upcoming science fiction 3-D shooter, **Judgment Phoenix**, at the recent COMDEX. The program is much more visually appealing than current titles and seems to indicate that we can expect a lot of exciting improvements from this network in the near future.

— Ed Dille

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Coming Attractions...

In the March Edition of Electronic Games

State of the Art: Genesis

What's the best multiplayer game for Sega's 16-Bit console? The best science fiction game? Which cartridge holds the best graphics and sound? EG editors pool their expertise to identify the cutting edge of Genesis entertainment.

The Players Guide to Mystery Games

Digital Criminals are running wild! We put new and forthcoming games under the magnifying glass to detect the best choices for cyber-sleuths.

CES Express: The Hits of the Show

Direct from Las Vegas—the best video, computer, multimedia and portable games unveiled at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show! We'll cruise the aisles and visit the suites and back rooms to ferret out the must-have new games.

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- Portable Playtime
- The Jury
- Playing It Smart
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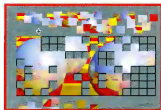
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